Nekogahara

Stray Cat Samurai

3

HIROYUKI TAKEI
CREATOR OF *SHAMAN KING*

OH!

GOOD!

YOU'RE BOTH AWAKE!

ネコガハラ

NekoGaHara

HIROYUKI TAKEI

武井宏之

CHAPTER 12:
THREE GROWN KITTENS!

takei

CHAPTER 12: THREE GROWN KITTENS! PAGE 1

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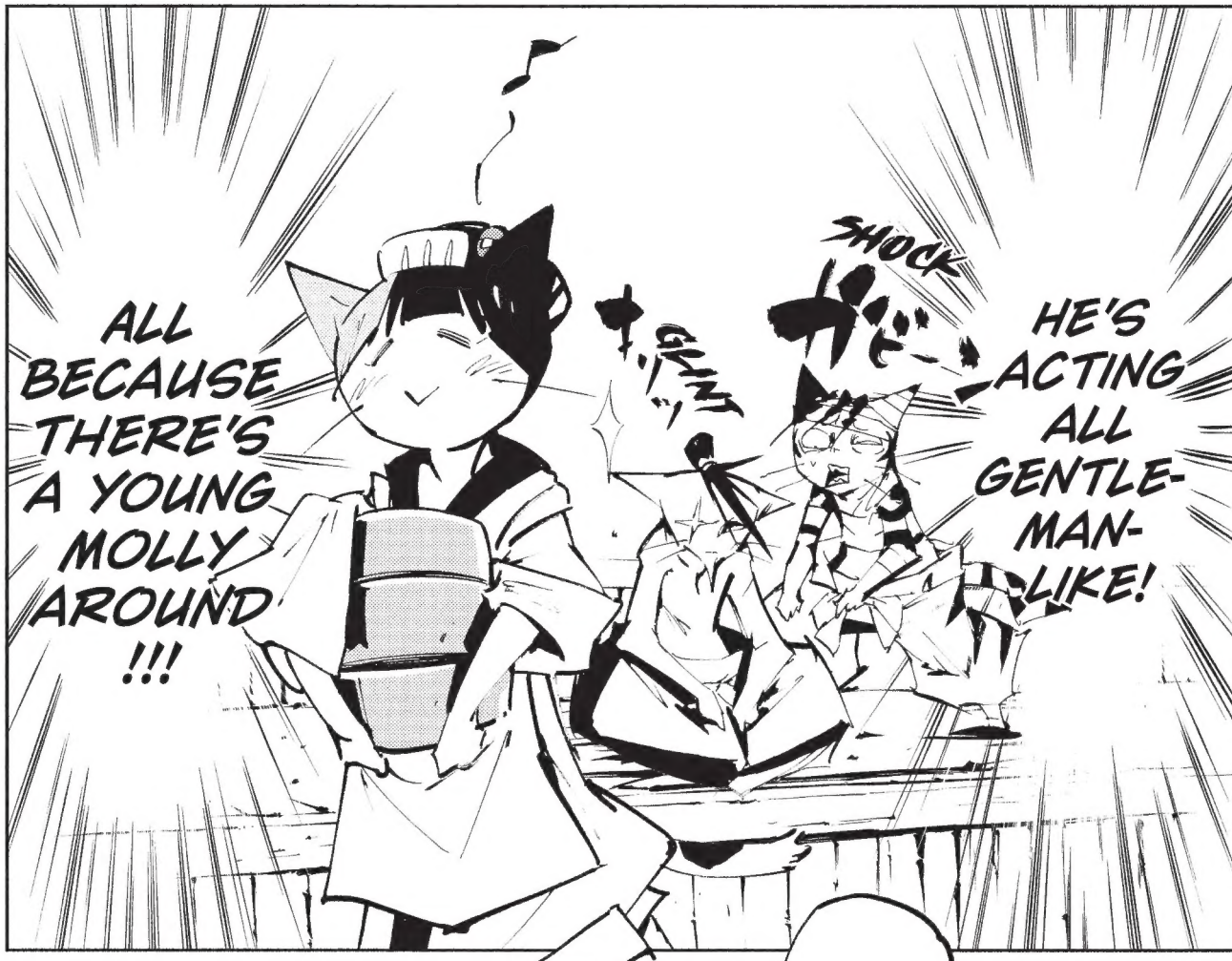
...HUH?
OH?

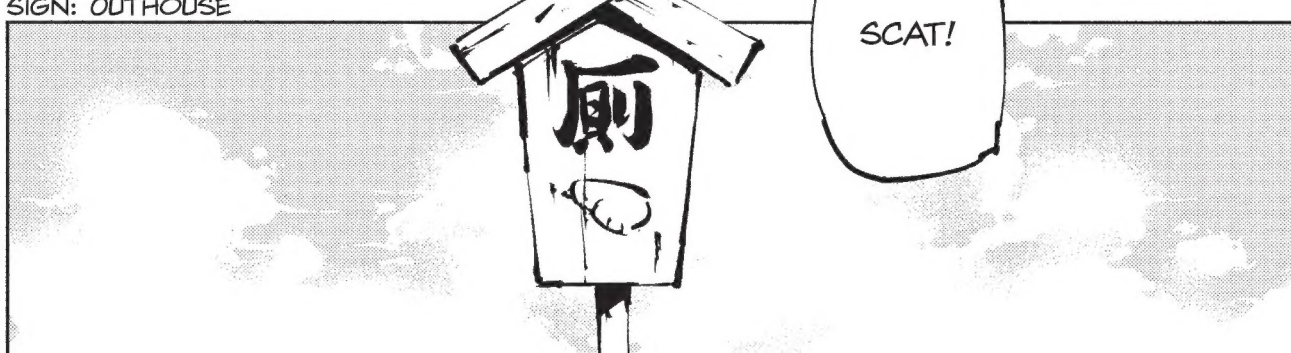
YOUNG TOM.
WHY WOULD YOU SPEAK TO ME SO?
PAT

Y-YOU?! I TOTALLY BUSTED YOUR BALLS! HOW ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?!
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! WHAT AM I DOING HERE?!!
SHAKE SHAKE
...
BALLS?!
B—

PLEASE, OSAMURAI-SAMA! I DON'T MIND ONE BIT!
...I APOLOGIZE. IT SEEMS I AM ONCE AGAIN IN YOUR DEBT, OMIKE-DONO.
AHEM.
WHA?
I'LL EXPLAIN EVERY-THING, SO FOR NOW, JUST WAIT HERE AND HAVE SOME TEA.
I'M JUST HAPPY TO SEE YOU AGAIN, DON'CHA KNOW.
YOU HAVE MY THANKS.
...ALL RIGHT.



SIGN: OUTHOUSE



HE BANGED ME UP PRETTY GOOD...
OWW... AND HE DIDN'T HOLD BACK.

I GUESS I SHOULD JUST BE GLAD I'M STILL ALIVE.
...OH WELL.
FLUTTER

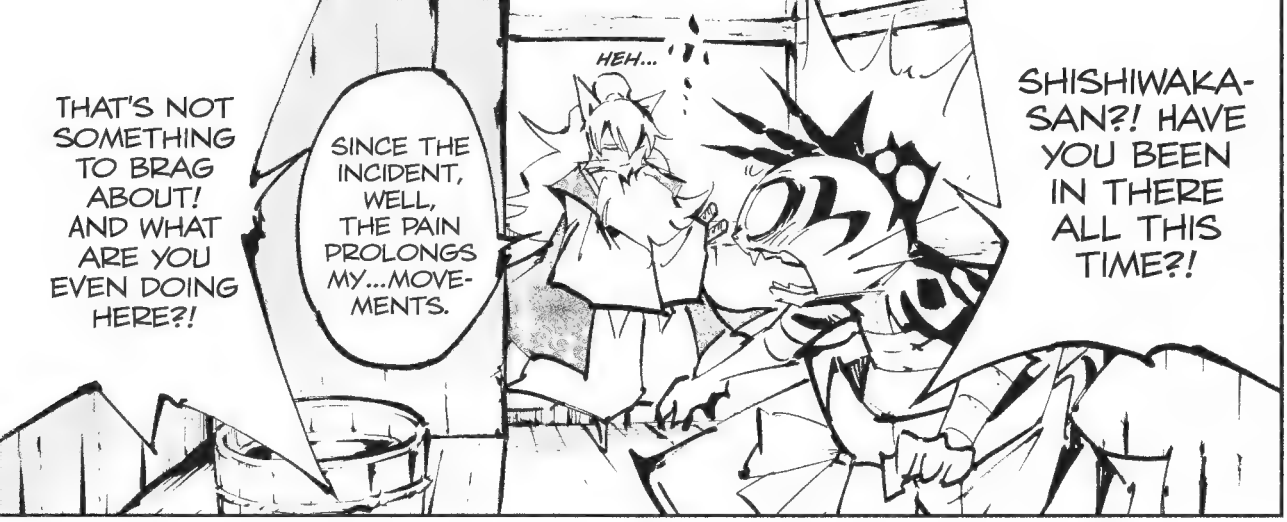
ACK!
!

THAT OLD MOG JUST CAN'T GET ANY WORSE!
ACTING LIKE HE DOESN'T GO AROUND HUMPING PIECES OF WOOD.
SPLASH
NO WONDER HE'S ALWAYS CONTRA-DICTING HIMSELF!
HNGH!

...IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYWAY.
HA HA... IF MY OLD MAN FINDS OUT, HE'S GONNA BITE MY HEAD OFF.
AAAHH...
PRETTY BIG HOLES THERE. THAT'LL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.
BUT... OH WELL. IT'S KINDA COOL, LIKE A STRAY CAT.

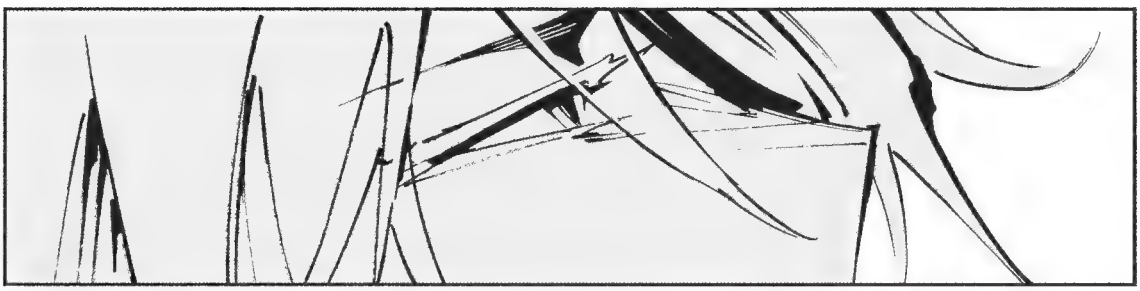
I'M...
...NEVER GOING BACK HOME AGAIN.

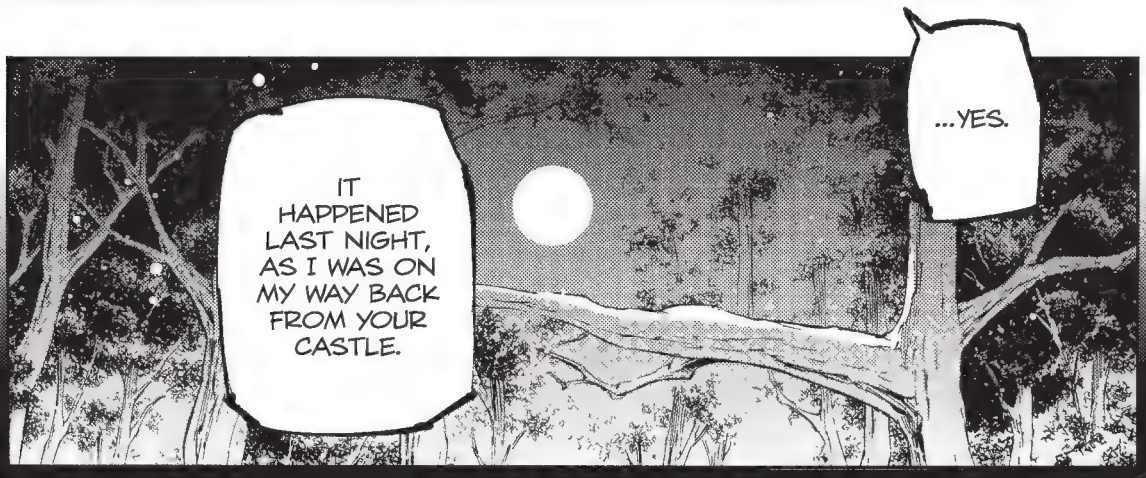
...NO.
YOU MUST GO BACK, SHORT. AND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS...YOU'LL DO AS YOUR FATHER SAYS, IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU.


SHISHIWAKA-SAN?! HAVE YOU BEEN IN THERE ALL THIS TIME?!
HEH...
SINCE THE INCIDENT, WELL, THE PAIN PROLONGS MY...MOVE-MENTS.
THAT'S NOT SOMETHING TO BRAG ABOUT! AND WHAT ARE YOU EVEN DOING HERE?!

...? REQUEST?

...YOU ASK THAT AS IF YOU THINK I WISH TO BE HERE.
I AM HERE BY REQUEST.



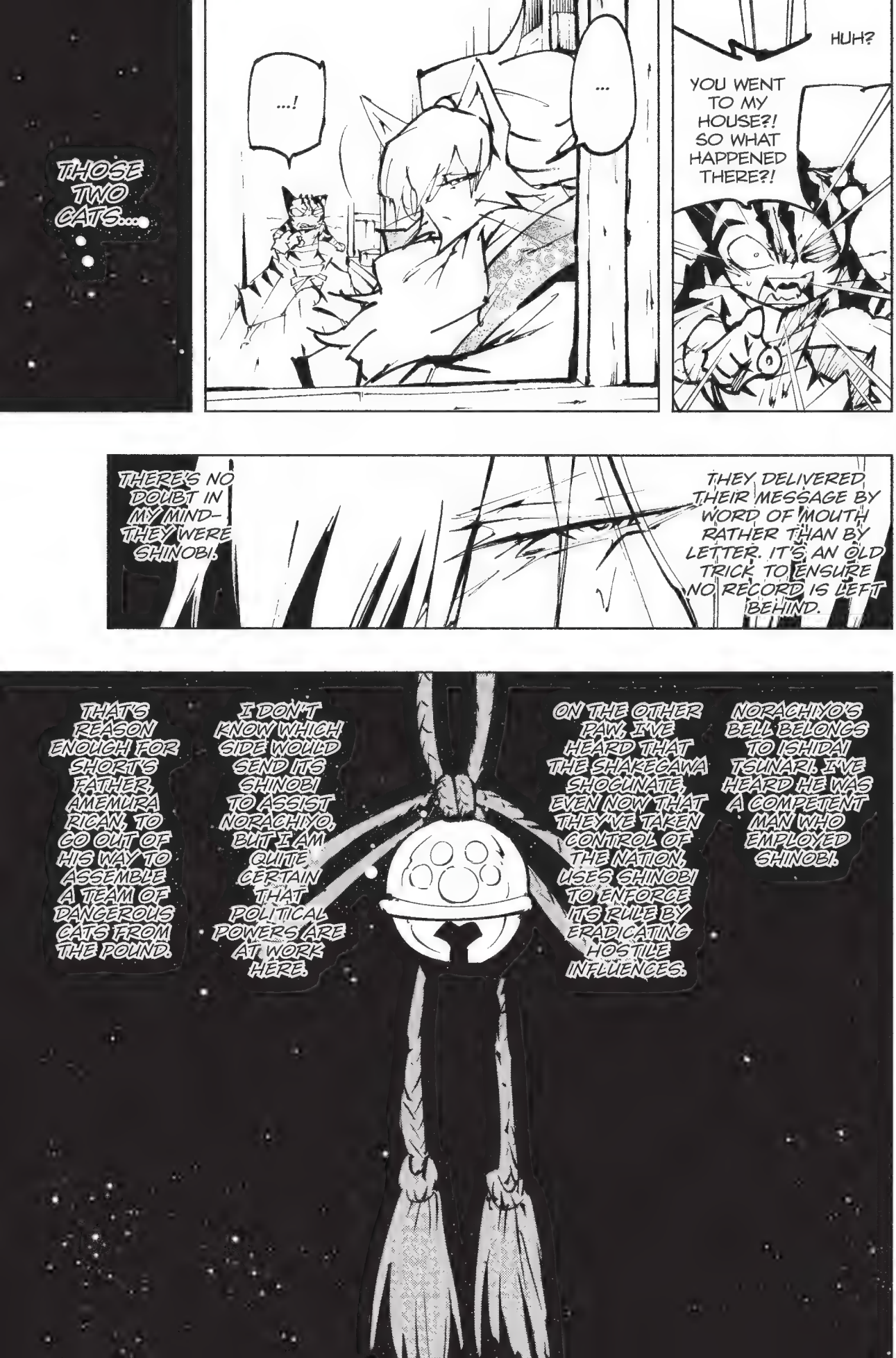

IT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT, AS I WAS ON MY WAY BACK FROM YOUR CASTLE.
...YES.

THEN THE PRIEST SPOKE.
WHILE I WALKED THE DARK, NIGHT PATH, WHO SHOULD ABRUPTLY APPEAR BUT A PRIEST, CARRYING YOU BOTH AS IF YOU WEIGHED NOTHING, AND A FEMALE WITH BLACK FUR.

"WE KNOW WHO HE REALLY IS."
WHEN THIS PAIR WAKES UP AT THE TEAHOUSE, I WANT YOU TO GIVE THEM A MESSAGE.
ALL RIGHT, THE REST IS UP TO YOU, NORWE SHISHIWAKA.
KO-H-I
THUD
"HE"?!
WAIT, WAIT. I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST IDEA WHAT YOU'RE-!
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM? NAME YOURSELF! JUST WHO ARE YOU CATS?!
!!

ALL THAT REMAINED WERE A TEAHOUSE– JUST VISIBLE PAST THE CLEARING FOG–AND THE TWO OF YOU.
BY THE TIME I RAISED MY HEAD, THEY HAD BOTH VANISHED FROM SIGHT.

IF I COULD HAVE IT MY WAY, I WOULD WAKE UP TO FIND THAT YESTERDAY *HAD* ALL BEEN A DREAM.
...IT WAS AS IF I WERE IN A DREAM.


THOSE TWO CATS...
...!
...
YOU WENT TO MY HOUSE?! SO WHAT HAPPENED THERE?!
HUH?
THERE'S NO DOUBT IN MY MIND– THEY WERE SHINOBI.
THEY DELIVERED THEIR MESSAGE BY WORD OF MOUTH RATHER THAN BY LETTER. IT'S AN OLD TRICK TO ENSURE NO RECORD IS LEFT BEHIND.
THAT'S REASON ENOUGH FOR SHORT'S FATHER, AMEMURA RICAN, TO GO OUT OF HIS WAY TO ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF DANGEROUS CATS FROM THE POUND.
I DON'T KNOW WHICH SIDE WOULD SEND ITS SHINOBI TO ASSIST NORACHIYO, BUT I AM QUITE CERTAIN THAT POLITICAL POWERS ARE AT WORK HERE.
ON THE OTHER PAW, I'VE HEARD THAT THE SHAKEGAWA SHOGUNATE, EVEN NOW THAT THEY'VE TAKEN CONTROL OF THE NATION, USES SHINOBI TO ENFORCE ITS RULE BY ERADICATING HOSTILE INFLUENCES.
NORACHIYO'S BELL BELONGS TO ISHIDAI TSUNARI. I'VE HEARD HE WAS A COMPETENT MAN WHO EMPLOYED SHINOBI.

SHUDDER

HUH? HEY, WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SHISHIWAKA-SAN?!
...I'VE DELIVERED THE MESSAGE. NOW I AM GOING TO GO INTO HIDING AND GIVE MYSELF TO TRAINING AWHILE AS I CONVALESCE.
YOU HAD BEST BEHAVE YOURSELF AS WELL, SHORT.
AMAGAMI SHIRO... TO THINK THAT TOM IS ALIVE...
!
DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GUY?
...AND REFUSES TO ACCEPT ANY OF THE RISKS. WHO DOES THAT?
CREEEAK
HE WALTZES INTO OUR PROVINCE, TRYING TO MAKE A NAME FOR HIMSELF...

I'M KURO-GANE HYŌE, FROM THE POUND.
TMP

BESIDES, I'VE HAD THIS ITCH THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY SINCE YESTER-DAY.
...AND NOW YOU'VE GOT ME CURIOUS ABOUT "WHO HE REALLY IS."
COME ON, PRETTY BOY. I WANNA SEE IF YOU CAN BEAT ME.

ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

I'M KURO-GANE HYŌE, FROM THE POUND.
BESIDES, I'VE HAD THIS ITCH THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY SINCE YESTERDAY.
...AND YOU'VE GOT ME CURIOUS ABOUT "WHO HE REALLY IS."
WHOOOOSH

WHOOSH
COME ON, PRETTY BOY. I WANNA SEE IF YOU CAN BEAT ME.

NEKOGAHARA

CHAPTER 13:
NORWEGIAN WOOD,
ACT ONE

HIROYUKI TAKEI

Takei

...NO.

IF I WERE TO DIE HERE, ALL WOULD BE FOR NAUGHT.
MY APOLO-GIES, BUT I MUST DECLINE.

LOOK AT YOU—FOR ALL YOUR BIG TALK, YOU SURE ARE QUICK TO ADMIT DEFEAT!
HUH?! HAAA HA HA!

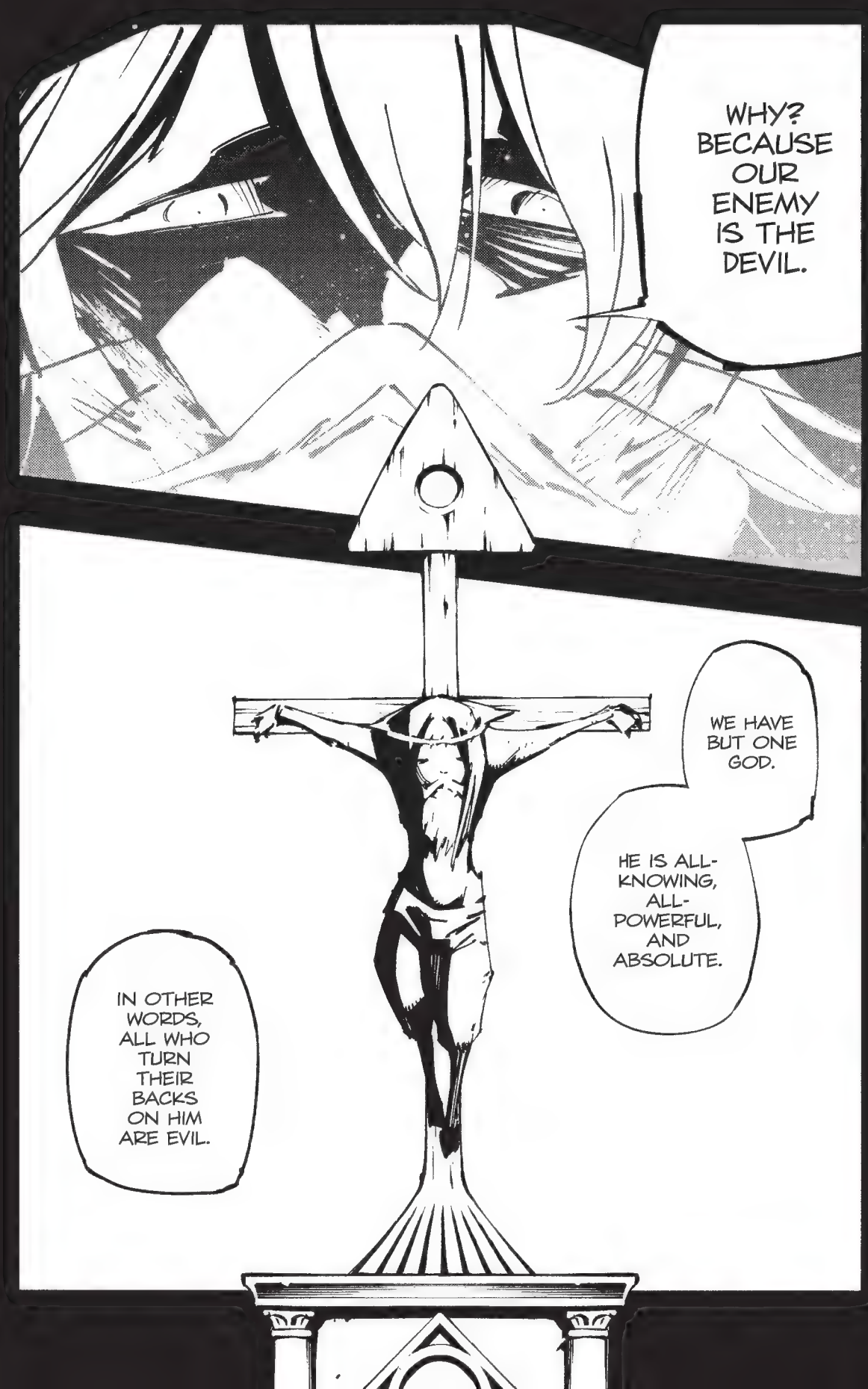
MY OPPONENT HAILS FROM THE POUND, A PLACE WHERE ONLY THE MOST HEINOUS CRIMINALS ARE BANISHED.
I KNOW TOO LITTLE ABOUT HIS PROWESS AND HIS PURPOSE.
NOT TO MENTION THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE HAS FRIENDS LURKING ABOUT.
...IT'S BETTER THIS WAY.
REGARDLESS OF THE DERISION IT WINS ME, A WISE CAT WOULD CHOOSE TO WALK AWAY.
SCRITCH
YOU WERE SOMETHING-OR-OTHER SHISHIWAKA, RIGHT? THE "YOUNG LION"?
DAMN.

YOU'RE SPINE-LESS.
THE MOST COWARDLY LION I'VE EVER SEEN.

SPINE-
LESS
COWARD!
SLAP

DON'T YOU UNDER-STAND, SHISHI-WAKA?

TO SPREAD THE WORD OF GOD, AS I'VE TOLD YOU TIME AND AGAIN.
WE CAME TO THIS LAND FOR ONE REASON, AND ONE REASON ALONE.
THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES US...TO LOVE ALL CREATURES EQUALLY, DOESN'T IT?!
BUT FATHER!
IF THAT'S SO, THEN WHY SHOULD WE HAVE TO DESTROY OTHERS?!


WHY? BECAUSE OUR ENEMY IS THE DEVIL.
WE HAVE BUT ONE GOD.
HE IS ALL-KNOWING, ALL-POWERFUL, AND ABSOLUTE.
IN OTHER WORDS, ALL WHO TURN THEIR BACKS ON HIM ARE EVIL.

...WE MUST BURN THE HEATHEN TEMPLES TO THE GROUND AND BUILD HEAVEN ON THIS VERY ISLAND.
ERGO...

KA-POW!
BUT FATHER...!
LOOK AT HIM, SHISHI-WAKA.
!
HE HAS TAKEN ALL THE BELIEVERS' PRAYERS UPON HIMSELF.

BECAUSE OF HIS UNWAVERING FAITH, HE IS STRONG.
BECAUSE OF HIS UNWAVERING FAITH, HE ATTRACTS THE BELIEF OF OTHERS.

WHICH IS WHY I HAVE DECIDED TO PLACE SHIRŌ AT THE HEART OF THE COMING BATTLE.
YOU COULD STAND TO LEARN FROM HIS EXAMPLE.
"SPINE-LESS COWARD."

...NO.
I AM NOT SPINE-LESS.
ヒュウウウ
WHOOOOOOSH
...EH?
YOU SAY SOME-THIN'?
I AM NOT THE SPINELESS COWARD.
I SAID...

...WHY WOULD HE ALLOW SUCH BRUTALITY?!

IF GOD TRULY DOES EXIST...

...IS TO STOP THINKING FOR YOURSELF !!!

TO BE SPINE-LESS...

ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

CLANG
I DESPISE CATS WHO LET THEM-SELVES BE DECEIVED!!!

THEY HAVE NO STANDARDS FOR GOOD OR EVIL!!!
THEY REFUSE TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES, AND MERELY PUT ALL THEIR FAITH INTO THOSE WITH POWER!!!
THAT IS WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE SPINELESS!!!

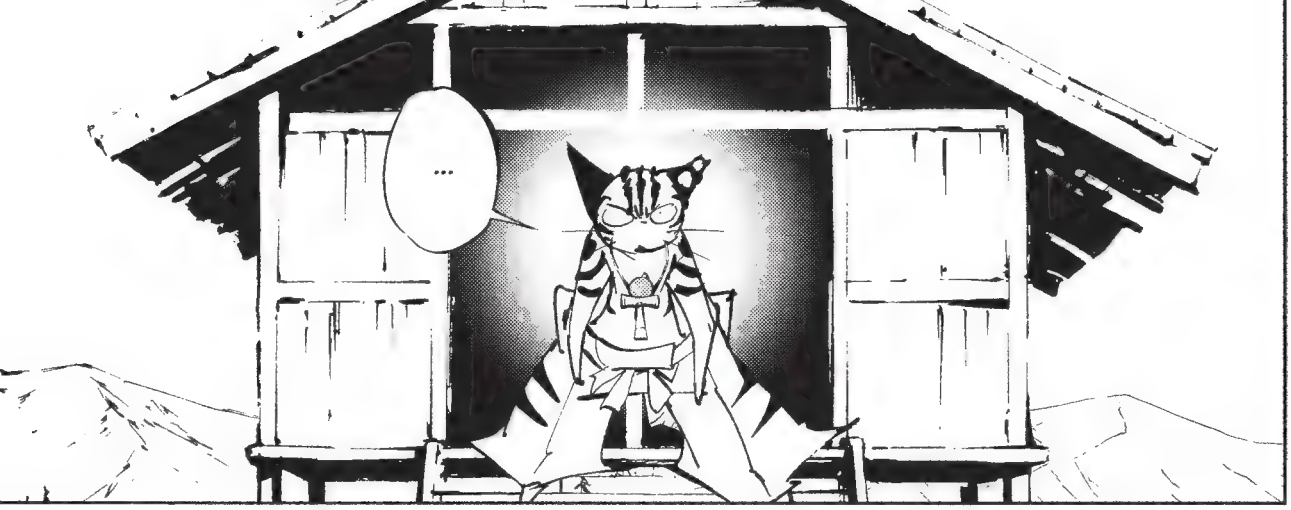
NEKOGAHARA

CHAPTER 14:
NORWEGIAN WOOD,
ACT TWO

I DON'T GIVE A FLEA'S ASS!!!
WHAM
ALL'S I WANT...
...IS TO SNAP SOME CAT IN TWO!!!

WHOOSH
...!!!

IS THIS THE POWER OF PURE, CONCEN-TRATED EVIL?
HIS ACTIONS CONTAIN NOT A MOMENT OF HESITA-TION.
HP
ZSHH
NGH!
SUCH POWER!
THIS IS KUROGANE HYŌE, A CONVICT FROM THE POUND.


...

HM?
WHOA, HEY! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, RANDOMLY STARTING A FIGHT LIKE THAT?!

THE HELL?
I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE IN MY LIFE, DOGGONE IT!

IF IT ISN'T THE YOUNG ARISTOCAT. WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
HUH?

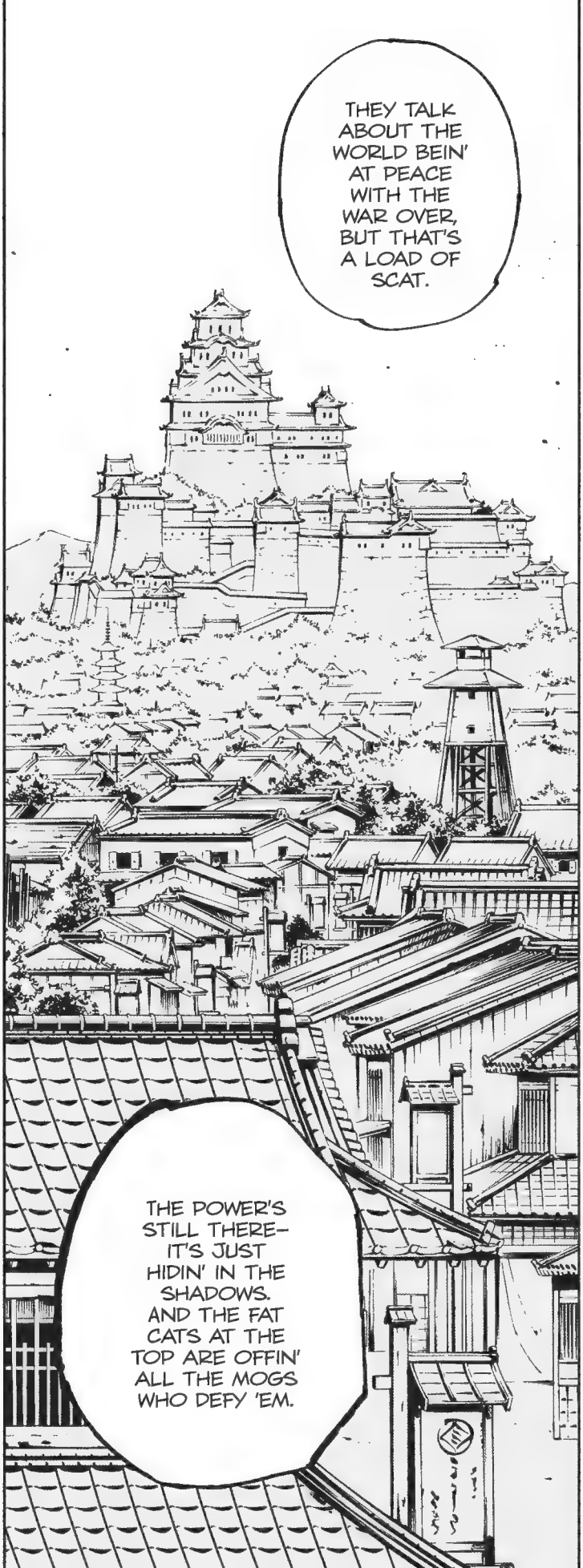
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?!
IF I AM TO DEFEAT HIM, I'LL HAVE TO REMOVE THE ADVANTAGE OF THOSE LONG LIMBS.
NNNRR-RAAAAHH!!!
KA-CLANG

FOR SOME REASON, CATS KEEP AIMING FOR MY LEGS THERE, SO I GOTTA COVER 'EM UP.
OH, THAT?
ARMOR!!!
WHAM
GRNK
WHOOSH
CLAMP
AH!

AWW. YOU'RE NOTHIN' BUT A LITTLE PUSSY-CAT.

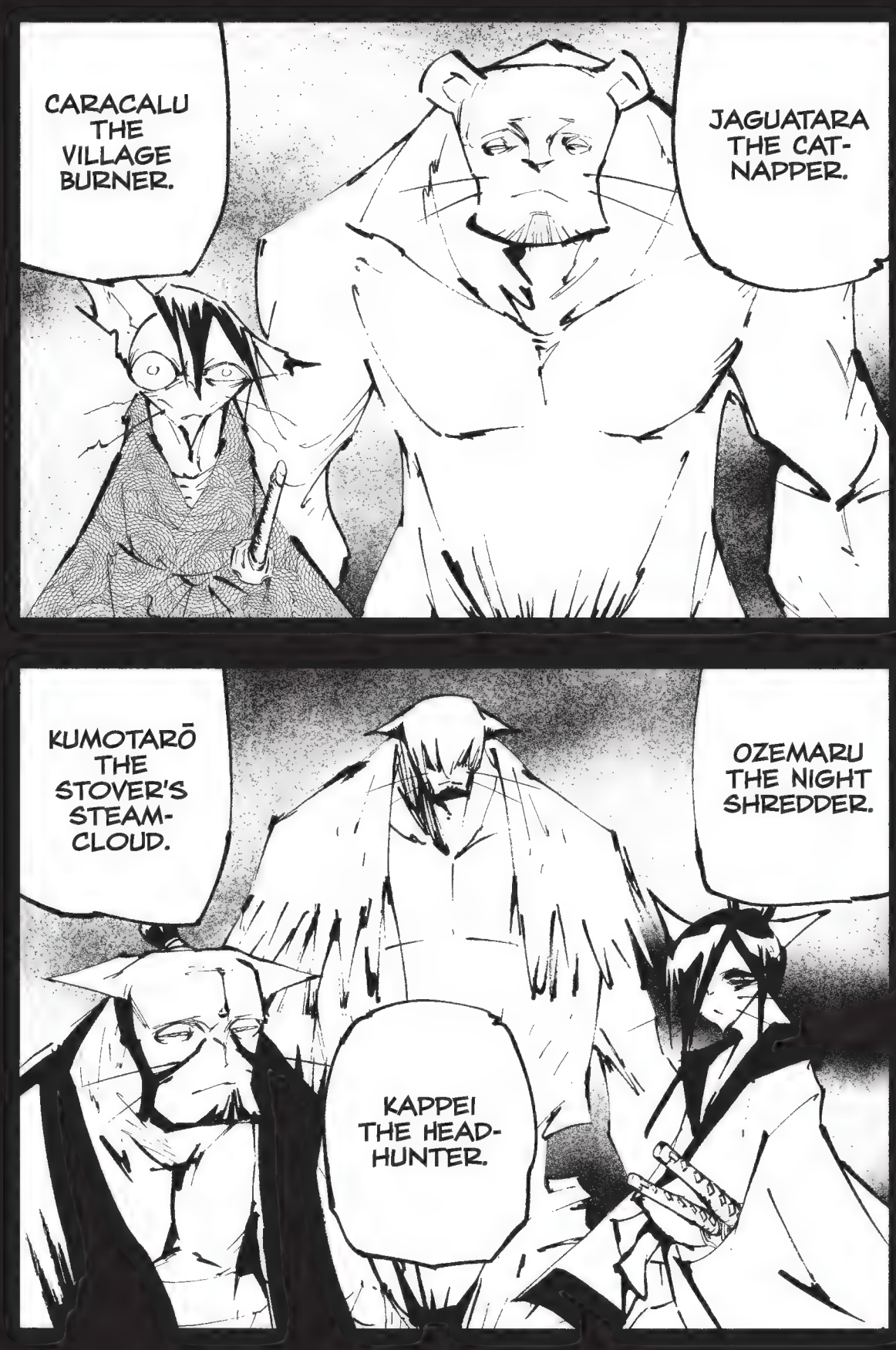
...TCH.

WHAM


THEY TALK ABOUT THE WORLD BEIN' AT PEACE WITH THE WAR OVER, BUT THAT'S A LOAD OF SCAT.
THE POWER'S STILL THERE— IT'S JUST HIDIN' IN THE SHADOWS. AND THE FAT CATS AT THE TOP ARE OFFIN' ALL THE MOGS WHO DEFY 'EM.

NGA-AAA-AAH-HHH!!!
GRIND
GRIND
...WELL, IT MUST BE TOUGH, BEIN' SUCH A WEAK-LING.
SINCE IT'S VIOLENCE WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND AN' ALL.

THAT'S WHY AMEMURA RICAN TOOK IN ALL US CATS FROM THE POUND— AS A PROTECTION RACKET.
"THERE ARE SOME BAD GUYS THAT YOU CHOOSE TO KEEP AROUND."


CARACALU THE VILLAGE BURNER.
JAGUATARA THE CAT-NAPPER.
KUMOTARŌ THE STOVER'S STEAM-CLOUD.
OZEMARU THE NIGHT SHREDDER.
KAPPEI THE HEAD-HUNTER.

EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US IS AN EVIL, FUR-RAISING MONSTER.
AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, **AMAGAMI SHIRŌ THE GREAT WAR CRIMINAL.** HE DOES WHAT HE WANTS AND NOBODY STOPS HIM.

MY DAD...
...BROUGHT CATS BACK FROM THE POUND?
THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT, LITTLE ARISTOCAT.
GRIND
GRIND
YEAH, WELL....
RICAN-SAMA IS PRETTY WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
SINCE YOU'RE HERE, YOU MIGHT AS WELL COME BACK WITH ME.

NNNGH!!!
MMMPH!!!
MM! MM MUMMEM MM MM MUMEEM MM!
?!
...!
MM! HRNGH!!!
POW
...?
SHISHI-WAKA-SAN?

THAT WOULD PUT YOU IN A PRECARIOUS POSITION, WOULDN'T IT?

ONE MOVE, AND HE DIES.

NNGH... BUT...

COME ALONG, KITTEN. ...COME WITH ME.

WHAT DO *YOU* KNOW, WEAK-LING?

PIECE OF SCAT.

...YOU'RE A FOOL, HYŌE.

YOU SHOULD HAVE KILLED ME WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE.

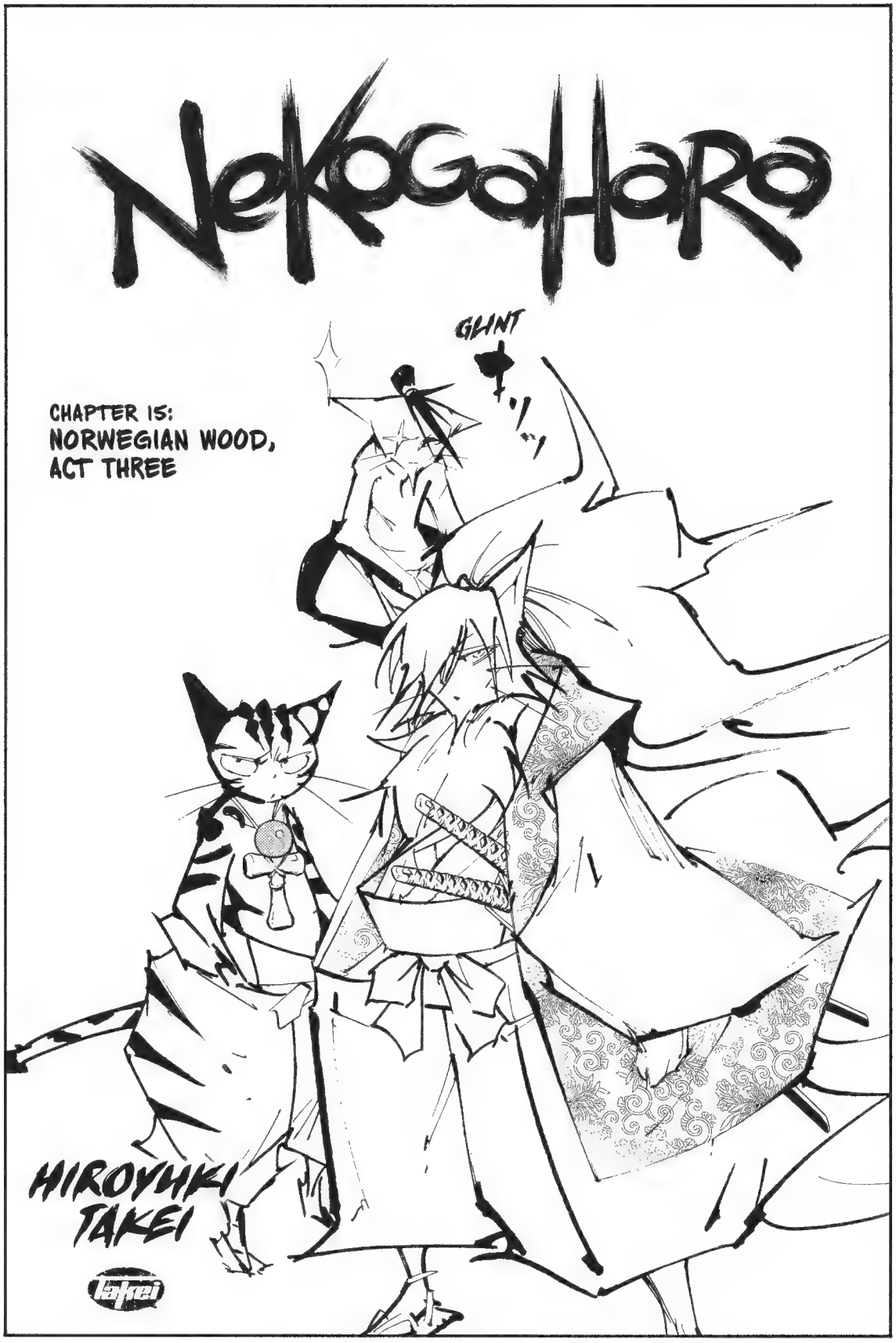
CLAMP

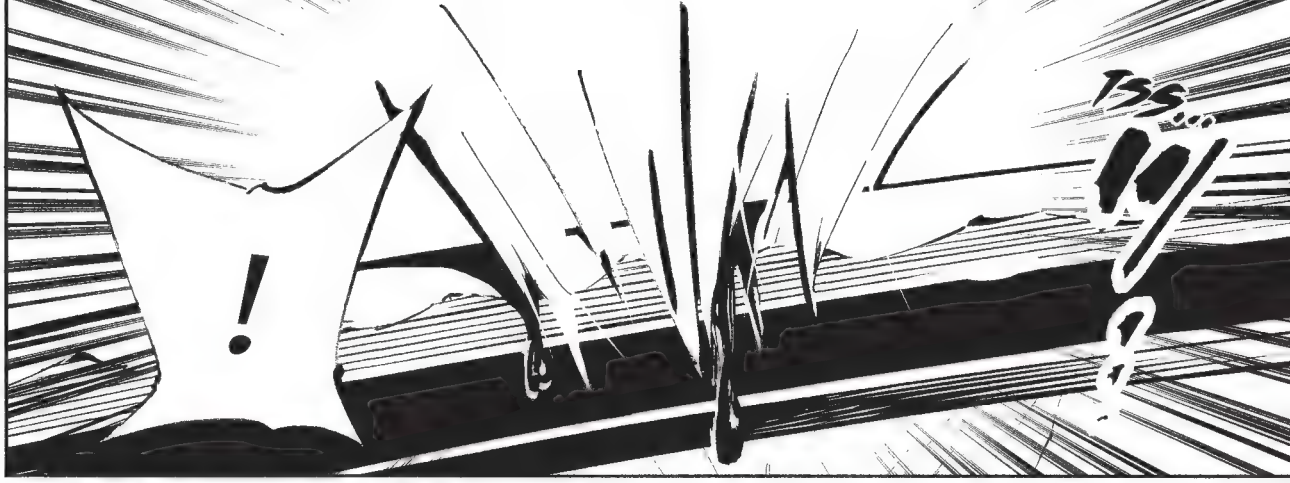
カリテ

ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

ONE MOVE, AND HE DIES.
THAT WOULD PUT YOU IN A PRECARIOUS POSITION, WOULDN'T IT, KUROGANE HYŌE?

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON, BUT I WAS RIGHT.
WHY DO I GOTTA BE A HOSTAGE IN ALL OF THIS?!
...?
...IS A DIRTY, ROTTEN COWARD !!!
NORWE SHISHI-WAKA...


NEKOGAHARA
GLINT
CHAPTER 15:
NORWEGIAN WOOD,
ACT THREE
HIROYUKI
TAKEI
ishkei


!
ISS...
!!
!

GLAWG
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF "NOBLE" PURPOSE HE'S WORKING TOWARD.
HE'S NOT BLUFFING!
DOG GONE IT!

SO WHAT DO I DO? BREAK OUT OF THIS MY-SELF?
BUT I GOT MY OWN WEAPON.

SON OF A BITCH.
YOU TRYING TO STEAL MY GLORY, SHISHI-WAKA-SAN?

AH HA...
!

YOU WERE THERE. YOU HEARD HIM.
COME ON.
...
HUFF
HUFF
?

BUT DAMN...IT MUST BE TOUGH ON A PARENT, HAVING SUCH A FAILURE FOR A SON.
"THAT FOOL SON OF MINE IS NOTHING BUT A NUISANCE. IF HE GOT HIMSELF KILLED, HE'D BE DOING ME A FAVOR."
"THAT WON'T BE NECES-SARY."

...HE HAS HIS OWN KITTEN DRAGGIN' HIM DOWN. IF I WERE HIM, I'D LOSE IT.
AFTER ALL HIS TROUBLE SURVIVING THE WAR, AND BUILDING HIS CRAZY HUGE CASTLE...

AMEMURA RICAN SHORT-NO-KAMI.
TRUTH IS, I WAS GONNA FIND SOMEWHERE ON THE WAY HOME WHERE NO ONE WAS LOOKING AND PUT THE LITTLE TOM OUT OF HIS MISERY.
BUT NOW I CAN JUST KILL YOU BOTH AT ONCE AND TAKE ALL THE GLORY FOR MYSELF.

THE HELL YOU SAY, FUR-BALL?!!

BAM

KA-POW

UGH

OH?

EVERY DOGGONE ONE OF YA, PULLING ALL THESE DIRTY ROTTEN TRICKS!
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!!!
WHAM
THE WHOLE WORLD PISSES ME OFF!

I MEAN, YEAH, I WAS PLAYING DIRTY TO GET AHEAD, TOO!
...!!!
BUT I FINALLY FIGURED OUT THAT MAKES ME NO BETTER THAN MY DOGGONE DAD!

SO YOU WANNA KILL ME? FINE!

THEN I'LL KILL ALL OF YA TOGETHER!

SWOOSH

SWOOSH

SWOOSH

SWOOSH

AND MY DAD, TOO! WITH MY TRUSTY WEAPON!!!

WHAM

AND I SWEAR, I WILL *NEVER* BE LIKE MY OLD MAN!

TIME TO DIE.

HA HA!

DON'T THINK THAT LITTLE TOY MAKES YOU SO TOUGH, YOU SNOT-NOSED CATLING!

CLAMP

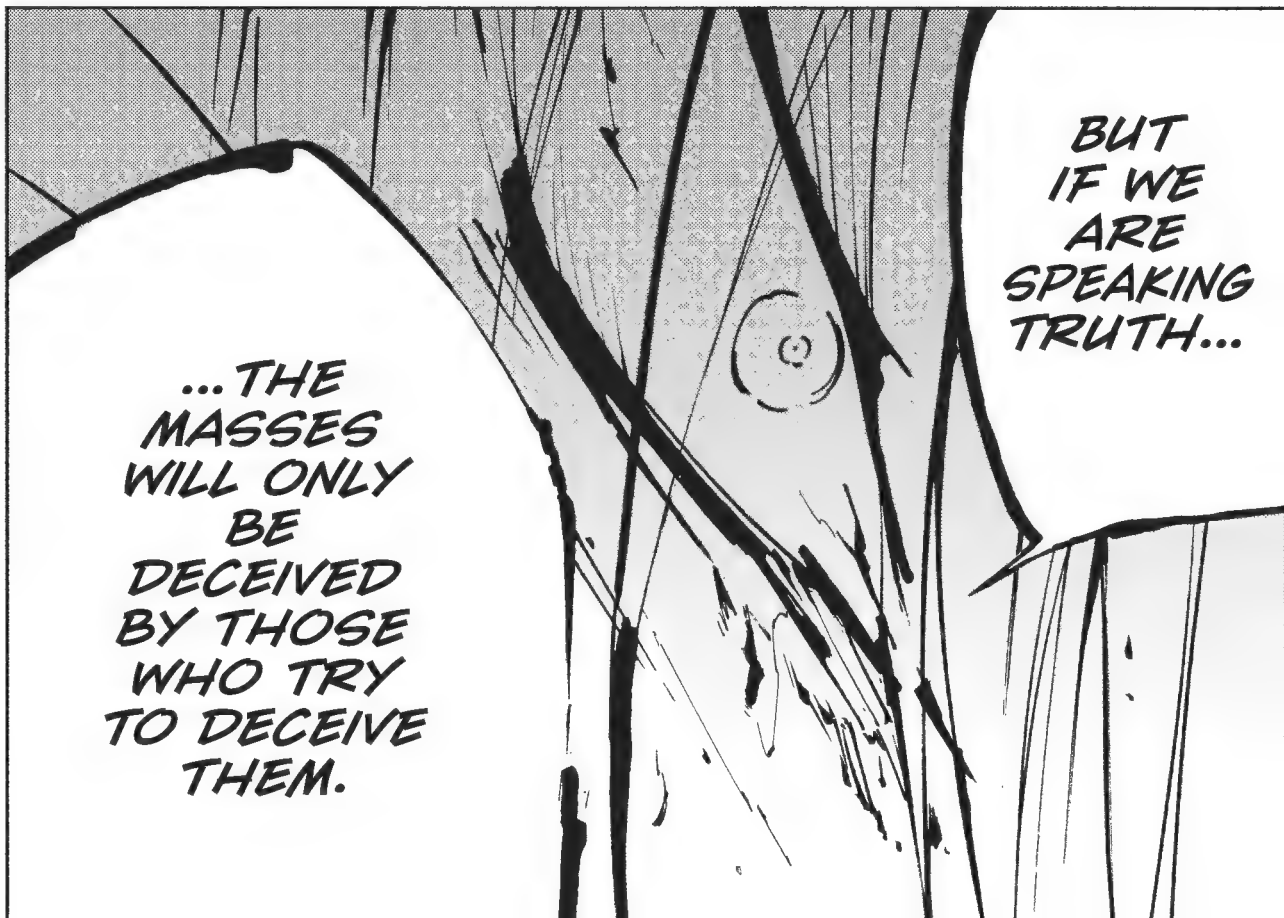
THOONK

...WELL DONE, SHORT.

YOU ARE INDEED THE TOM I KNEW YOU TO BE.

I HAD HEARD THAT YOU DEFEATED *HIM* WITH THAT KENDAMA OF YOURS.
GLINT
SO I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF USING IT TO MY ADVAN-TAGE.
THAT STRENGTH WAS INDISPENS-ABLE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HYŌE'S MASS.

CALL ME WHAT YOU WILL.
...YOU ...YOU DIRTY COWARD.
OH?


BUT IF WE ARE SPEAKING TRUTH...
...THE MASSES WILL ONLY BE DECEIVED BY THOSE WHO TRY TO DECEIVE THEM.

AND SO...
ZH ZH...
...CALL ME A DIRTY COWARD AS OFTEN AS YOU LIKE, BUT I NEED ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY.
THUD

...TO STOP HIM AND LEAD CATS ARIGHT.

I NEED AUTHORITY...

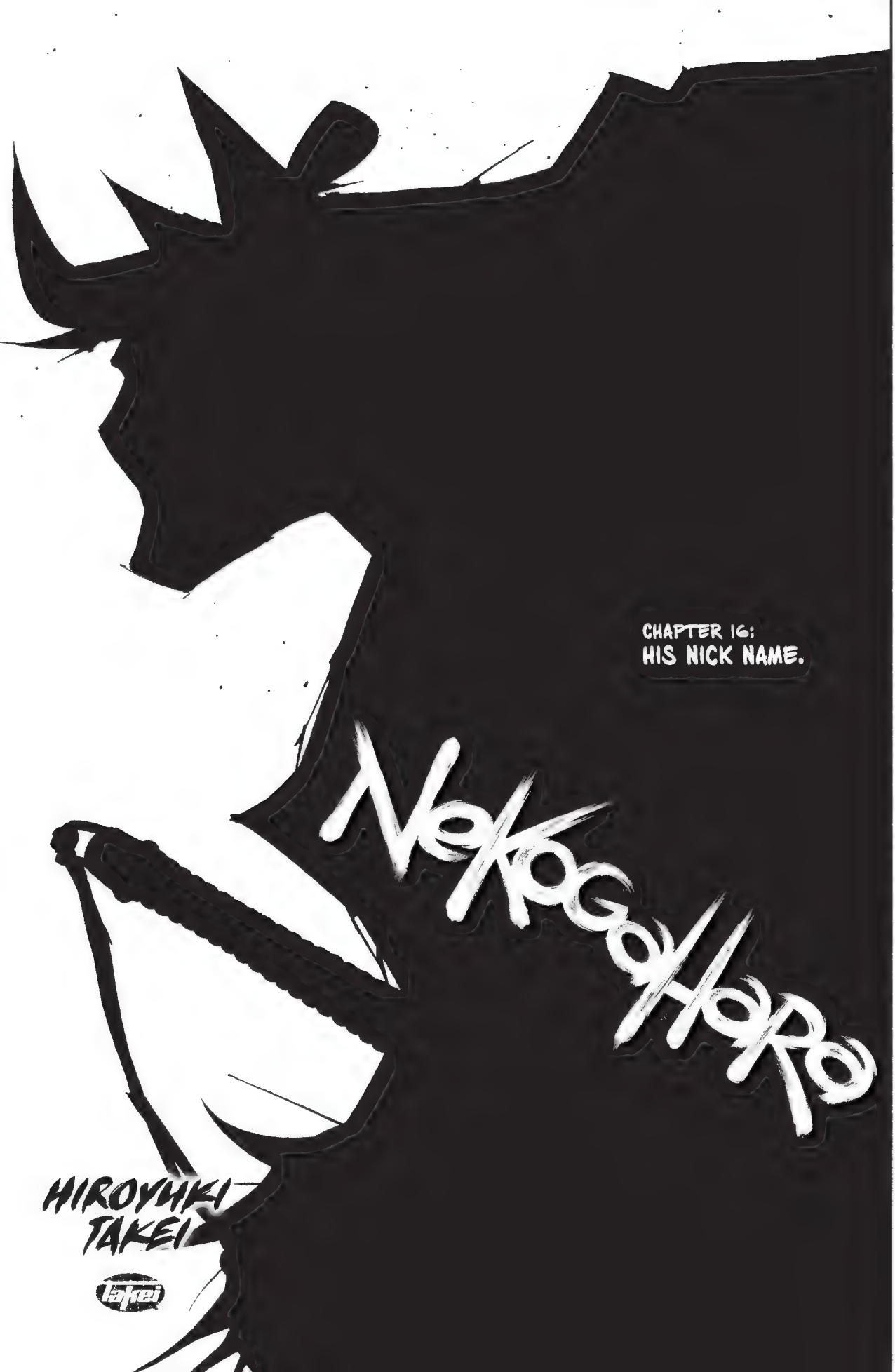
I MUST DEFEAT AMAGAMI SHIRŌ.

ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

OOF
DA!

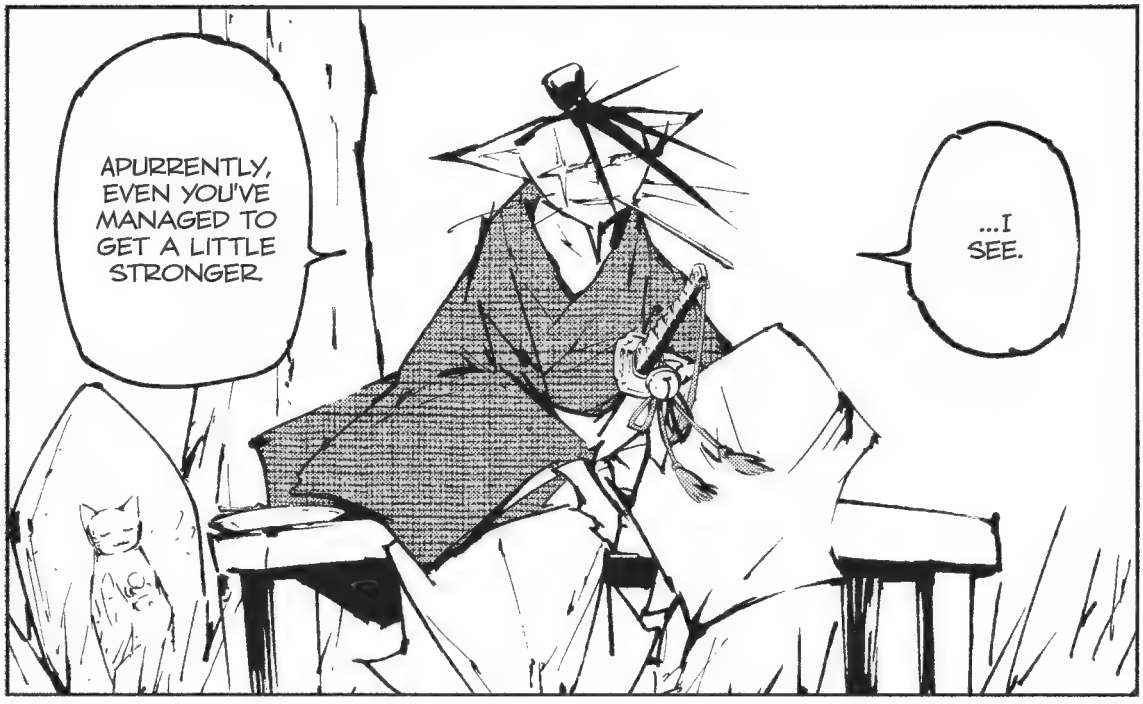
YOU'RE HURT! WHAT HAPPENED ?!!!
YOU-!!

...
OMIKE. GO BOIL SOME WATER FOR HIM, QUICKLY.
GLINT
YOU LOOK TERRI-BLE.
!
DAMN IT, YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO ACT COOL?!

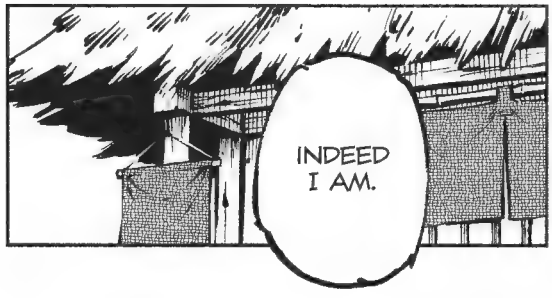

CHAPTER 16:
HIS NICK NAME.
Nekogahara
HIROYUKI TAKEI
takei

DOESN'T RING A BELL. ARE YOU SURE HE WAS AT THE POUND?
KURO-GANE HYŌE?
...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IF HE'S FROM THE POUND I KNOW, YOU COULD NEVER TAKE HIM DOWN.
HA HA HA.

...GH!
I AM STILL WEAK... IN EVERY RESPECT.
...I CANNOT DENY IT.
WHAT WAS THAT, KNAVE?!
ACK!
NOW, NOW, DON'T GET YOUR TAIL IN A TWIST.
YOUR ASS STILL HURTS, DOESN'T IT? ALL I'M SAYING IS YOU'RE NOT AT YOUR BEST.


APURRENTLY, EVEN YOU'VE MANAGED TO GET A LITTLE STRONGER.
...I SEE.

WAIT, YOU'RE NOT HERE TO DELIVER THAT MES-SAGE, ARE YOU?!
OH!


INDEED I AM.

ANYWAY, WHAT THE HELL BRINGS YOU BACK HERE? DON'T TELL ME YOU WANT PAYBACK FOR WHAT I DID TO YOUR ASS?
...WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
...WOULD YOU STOP TALKING ABOUT MY POSTERIOR, NORACHIYO?

LAST NIGHT, A PORTLY MONK ESCORTING A BLACK-FURRED FEMALE ASKED ME TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.
BUT APPARENTLY, THEY "KNOW WHO HE REALLY IS."
...I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST IDEA WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.

HA!
CRUNCH
THE SLY OLD FOX. HE WAS A SHINOBI ALL ALONG.
I SEE. SO THE MONK'S "LITTLE FOLD."

WHAT THAT'S SUPPOSED TO MEAN? WHAT WAS THE POINT OF THE MESSAGE?
AH?
H-HEY! WHO'S THIS "HE"?!
GOOD QUES-TION.
SO? WHAT'S THE ANSWER?
I TOLD YOU, I DON'T KNOW.
BUT NOW MY BUSINESS WITH YOU IS TRULY FINISHED.
WHO CAN SAY?
I AM LEAVING ON A JOURNEY, TO TRAIN TO BE A WARRIOR.
AND SHORT...

RICAN HAS AT LEAST SIX MORE POUND CATS IN HIS COMMAND, ALL IN THE SAME CLASS AS HYŌE.
I HATE TO BE REPETITIVE, BUT WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT DEFY YOUR FATHER.

...
...

...AHA.

SHISHI-WAKA-SAN...

YOU HAVE ENEMIES WORKING FOR AMEMURA RICAN, RIGHT?
SHISHI-WAKA, WAIT.
!

I'VE FINALLY PUT IT ALL TOGETHER.

...LET'S ALL GO TO THE CASTLE. RIGHT NOW.
IN THAT CASE ...

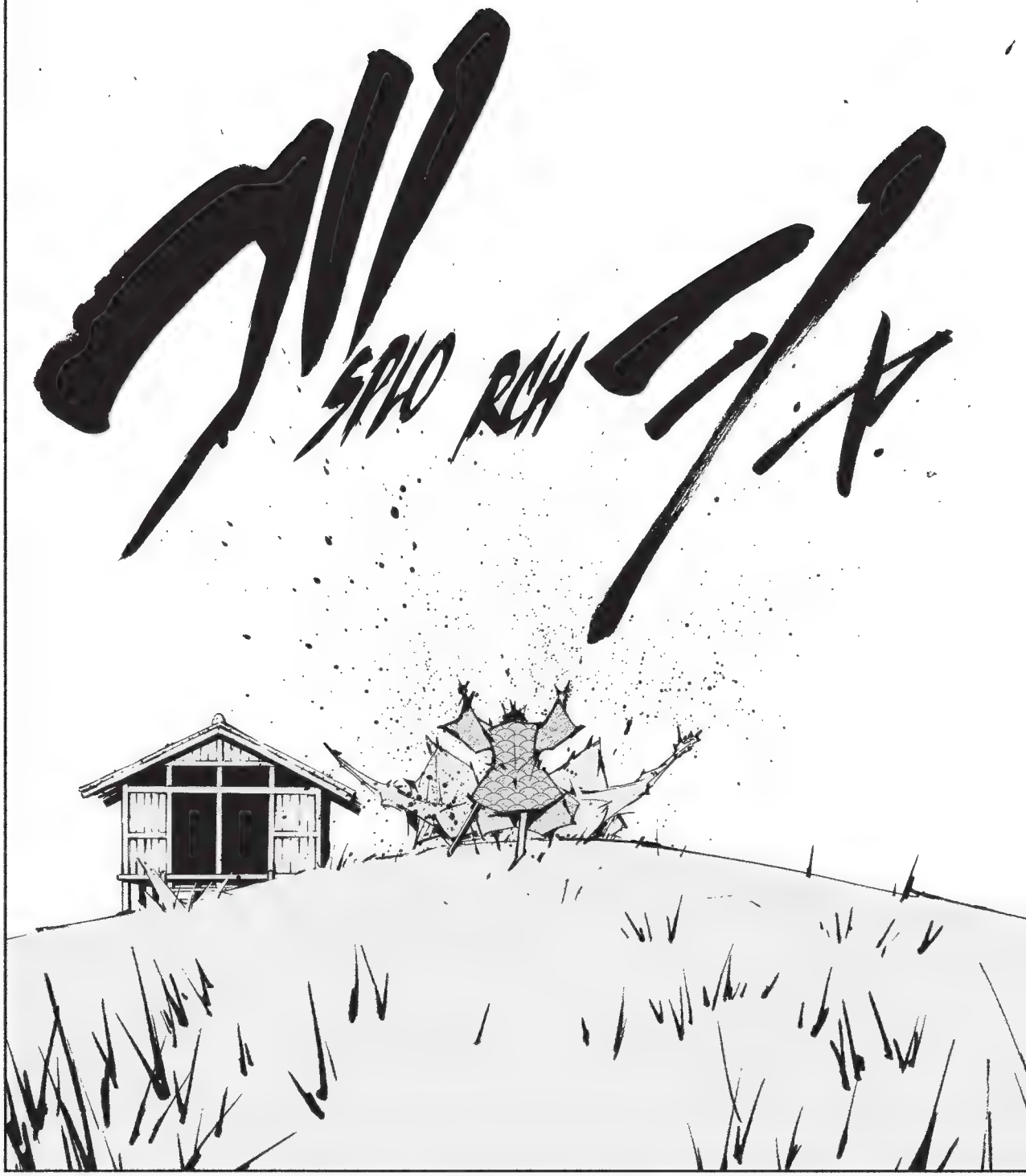
WE CAN PUT IT OFF AS LONG AS WE WANT, BUT WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE EVENTUALLY.
RIGHT?
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO GET STRONGER, YOU CHOOSE AN OPPONENT YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT KILLING.

WHOOOOSH
THAT SON OF A... HE MISSED MY VITALS...
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
...DOG-GONE IT.

HUFF
...I CAN'T WAIT.
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
...WELL, WHAT-EVER.
...DID HE WANT TO KILL ME SLOWLY AND PAIN-FULLY?
OR IS HE JUST A STINKIN' AMATEUR?
EITHER WAY, I'LL MAKE HIM REGRET LETTING ME LIVE.
EVEN ON THE BRINK OF DEATH, YOU REFUSE TO STOP TALKING. THAT'S JUST SICK.
HH...!
ZSH

YO, HYŌE. YOU'RE AS GIGANTIC AS EVER.
IT *HAS* BEEN A LONG TIME, HASN'T IT?
HOW'S YOUR CHIN?
THE ONE I SMASHED FOR YOU.

YOU'RE THE POUND'S...
YOU...!
IM...
IMPOS-SIBLE.
...
HA, HA, HA!


SPLO RCH

...KNOW-
ING WHO
I REALLY
AM.
ALL
THESE
CATS
RUNNING
AROUND
FREE...
THIS HAS
GOT TO
STOP.

WHAT'S FOR DINNER TONIGHT?
...NOW THEN.
ZASH...

ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

URP!
...YOU DON'T SEE GIANT CATS LIKE HIM EVERY DAY, BUT WITH HIS FACE SO MESSED UP, IT'S STILL IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHO HE IS.
THAT'S JUST BRUTAL.
WE HAVE A WITNESS REPORT!
BOSS!

PHWAAH
...
AND THE FARMERS GOT A GOOD LOOK AT THEIR FACES!
THEY SAID HE WAS FIGHTING TO THE DEATH AGAINST TWO CATS!
CLACK
...REALLY.
DRAW UP THE WANTED POSTERS, AND MAKE IT SNAPPY.
GOOD. THOSE MUST BE OUR TOMS.
GLINT

NEKOGAHARA

CHAPTER 17:
DEBUT

POSTER: [RIGHT] SHORT
POSTER: [MIDDLE] NORACHIYO
POSTER: [LEFT] SHISHIWAKA

I SAID, WE'RE GONNA GO STORM YOUR DAD'S CASTLE.
HUH?

...YEAH, BUT WHY?
...
...

WHY ELSE?
AH?

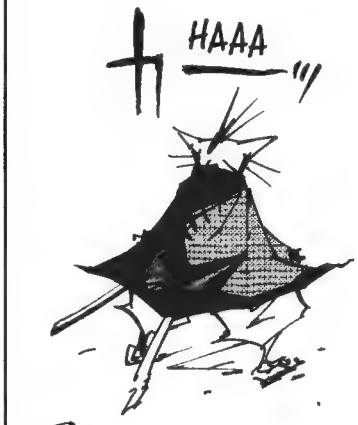
AND I HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR SHORT'S OLD TOM.
AND NONE OF US WANTS ANYONE BEATING 'EM TO THE PUNCH, RIGHT?
YOU WANNA KILL ONE OF THOSE POUND CATS.
YES, BUT... AND HOW DID YOU KNOW?
YOU WANNA KILL YOUR DAD.
I GUESS ...
EVEN IF WE WORKED TOGETHER, THE DISADVANTAGE IS TOO GREAT. AND I DON'T BELIEVE WE HAVE ANY REASON TO JOIN FORCES TO BEGIN WITH.
SHORT IS RIGHT, NORA-CHIYO.
IF WE GO RIGHT NOW, WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE!
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA! JUST SLOW DOWN!
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT, STUPID.
HA HA HA.
HAAA

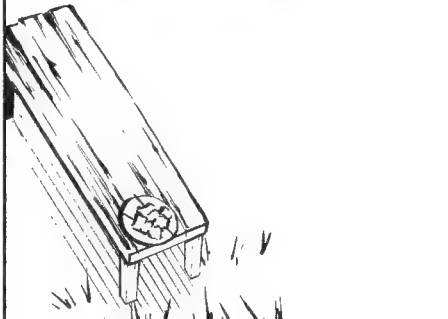
OH, EXCUSE ME.

カミ
CLAMP

...ENOUGH OF YOUR JOKES.
NINE LIVES AREN'T ENOUGH TO SURVIVE YOUR COMPANY.

UH, NO, WAIT A SECOND, SHISHI WAKA-SA...


HAAA



IT MUST BE MY LUCKY DAY! I ALREADY FOUND THE TOMS I WAS LOOKING FOR!
WELL, NOW!

POSTER: [RIGHT TO LEFT] SHORT, SHISHIWAKA

*THE SAMURAI PRACTICE OF KILLING A RANDOM PASSERBY, USUALLY TO TEST A NEW WEAPON.

AND WAIT. ...HE HAS A WANTED POSTER FOR ME?
SHIRIYA ABYHEI FROM THE SECRET POLICE.
...LOOKS NOTHING LIKE ME!
IT ooo
DEPENDING ON HOW THINGS GO...YOU MIGHT BE DEAD...
OF COURSE...

...BEFORE WE EVEN GET THERE!!!

KA-CLANG

...NORA-CHIYO!!!
GRNG
GRNG
GRNG
SEE?
WE CAN PUT IT OFF AS LONG AS WE WANT, BUT WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE EVENTUALLY.
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING...?!
THE POLICETOM PULLED HIS SWORD BEFORE HE EVEN FINISHED TALKING!
AND HE SWUNG IT AS HARD AS HE COULD...
HE REALLY MEANT TO OFF SOME-BODY!!!

...WELL, WELL, WHAT'S THIS?
TO THINK I'D REEL IN THE FISH I WANTED MOST FOR DINNER.
BUT THAT'S ODD.
THE MOG I KNOW WOULD'VE BEEN LONG GONE BY NOW. ...ARE YOU REALLY HIM?
WHO CAN SAY?
BUT GUESS WHAT, ABYHEI.
GRG- GRG...

LUNGE
I JUST HAPPENED TO FIND A REASON TO SEE YOU, TOO!!!

SWISH

HUNH?
KA-CLING!!!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? TRYING TO GET ANSWERS OUT OF ME BY FORCE?

WHAM

YOU'LL LOSE MORE THAN JUST AN EYE THIS TIME.

...HOW BAR-, BARIC.

IS THIS TRULY WHAT THEY CALL A BATTLE?!

...HE TOOK NORA-CHIYO'S EYE?!!

...

...PIECE OF SCAT, YOU'RE STILL FIGHTING DIRTY. ALWAYS AIMING FOR MY BLIND SPOTS.

BUT I'M NOT THE CAT I USED TO BE.

CHAK

"JITTE SWORD."

WHAT A COINCIDENCE, NORACHIYO. NEITHER AM I.

POW

ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

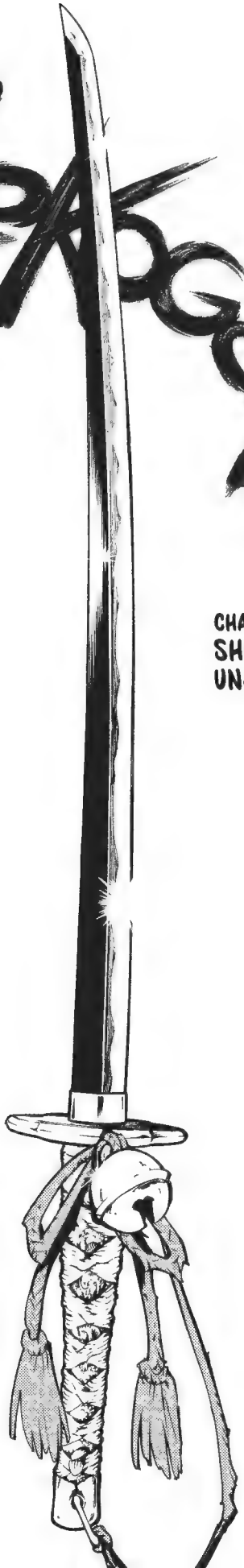
WHAT A COIN-CIDENCE, NORACHIYO. NEITHER AM I.

I'VE GOT QUITE A FEW MORE TRICKS UP MY SLEEVE, THANKS TO YOUR CONSTANT RUNNING AWAY.

...NO!!! HIS KATANA IS CAUGHT!
RETREAT, NORA-CHIYO!
TOO LATE.
CHING
BLADE TECH-NIQUE: JUMANJI.

NOBOGOHARA

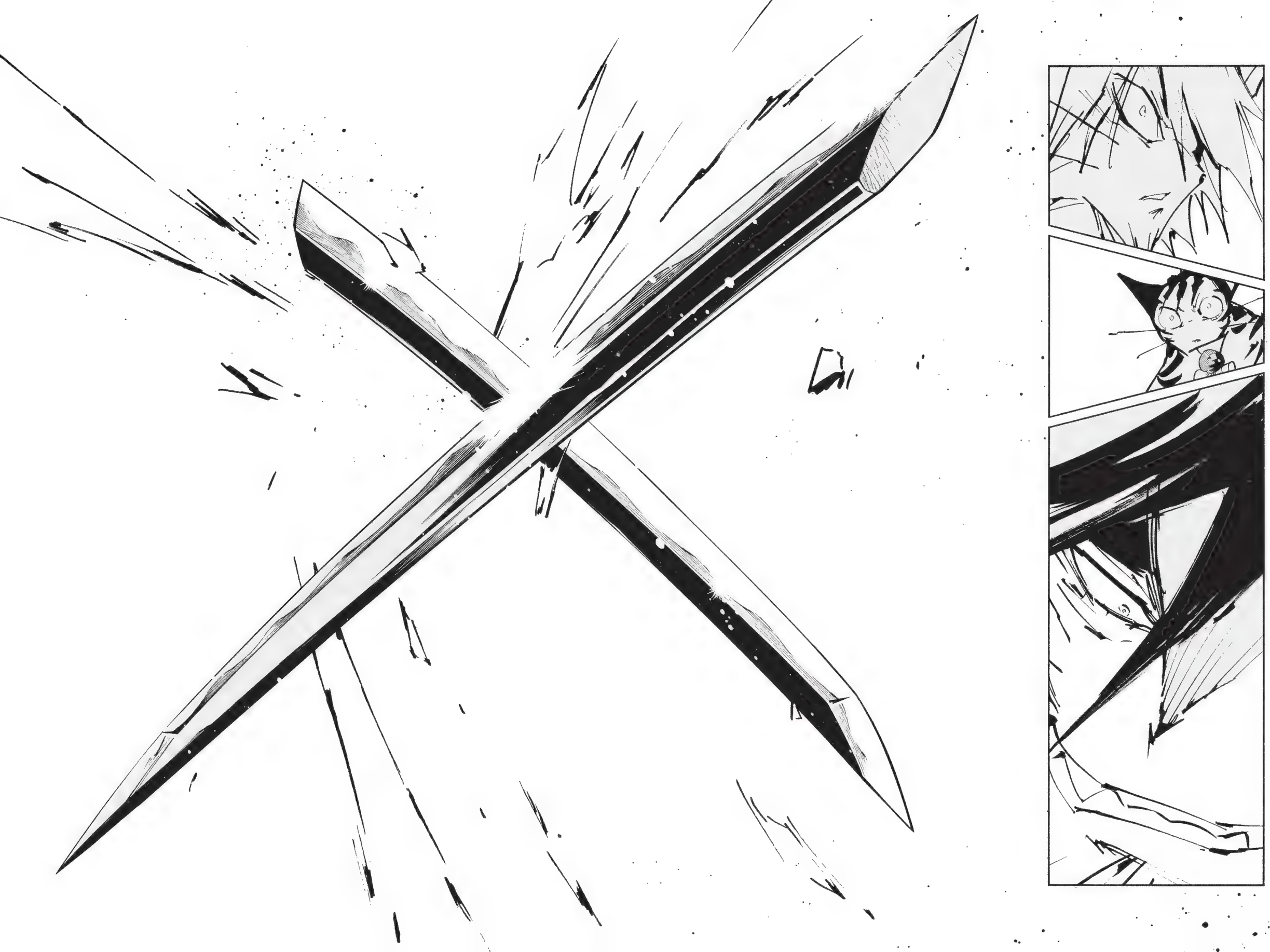
CHAPTER 18:
SHEEP'S CLOTHING,
UNSAFE-CRACKER



HIROYUKI TAKEI

takei

KA-CLANG



HEY, COME ON.

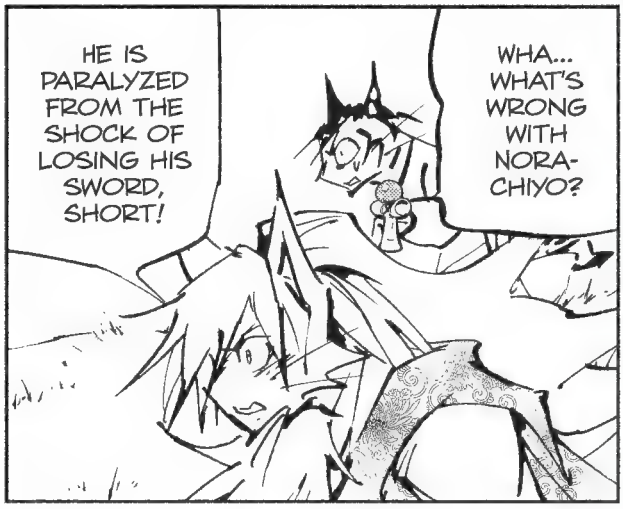
SNAP OUT OF IT, NORA-CHIYO.

WHAM

KOTATSU!!

THIS FIGHT ISN'T OVER, YOU KNOW!
WHAM

...
NORA-CHIYO'S TOOTH...
...!


HE IS PARALYZED FROM THE SHOCK OF LOSING HIS SWORD, SHORT!
WHA... WHAT'S WRONG WITH NORA-CHIYO?

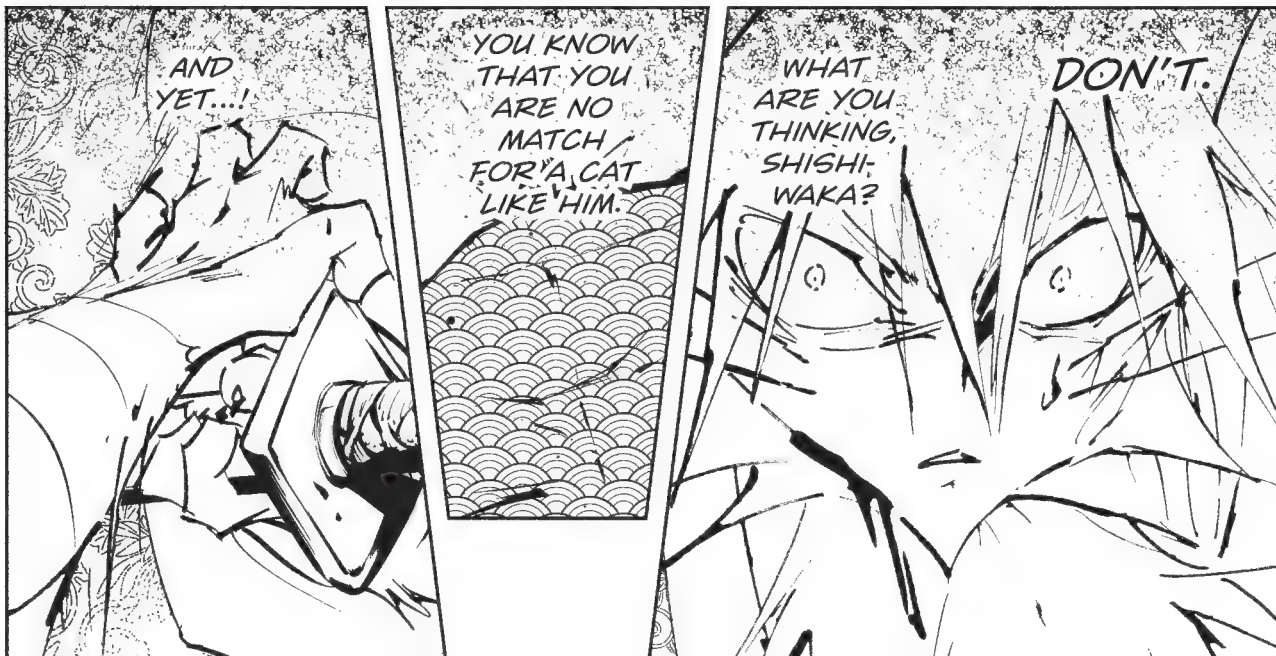
THAT'S NO REASON TO JUST...

AND WHAT IS WRONG WITH THAT OFFICER?!
BONK
IF THAT KEEPS UP, HE'S A DEAD CAT!
BONK
SNAP

KOTATSU!

IT'S LIKE HE'S PLAYING WITH A TOY.
THAT DOG-GONE ABYHEI.
B-DMP

チャ
CHAK'Y
...


AND YET...!
YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR A CAT LIKE HIM.
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, SHISHI-WAKA?
DON'T.

FWISH
FOR SOME REASON, I HAVE AN INTENSE URGE TO HELP HIM.
IN THAT CASE...
...LET'S ALL GO TO THE CASTLE. RIGHT NOW.

WHAM
GIVE IT A REST, YOU STUPID FUR-BALL!!!
YOU TRYING TO STOP ME?
THE OLD TOM'S NOT FIGHTING BACK ANY-MORE!

I'M ADDING OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE TO YOUR CHARGES!
BA-CHING

DAMN YOU, ABYHEI!
SHORT!
AH!
BAM

THIS UNHESITATING STRENGTH!
...THIS –!
IT'S JUST LIKE...!!!
IF YOU TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHO I AM, YOU WILL DIE.
YOU BETTER STOP THERE.
SHUD

THE SAME SCENT AS AMAGAMI SHIRŌ... FROM THE POUND.

HE CARRIES THE SAME SCENT AS AMAGAMI SHIRŌ.

I AM GOING TO DIE.

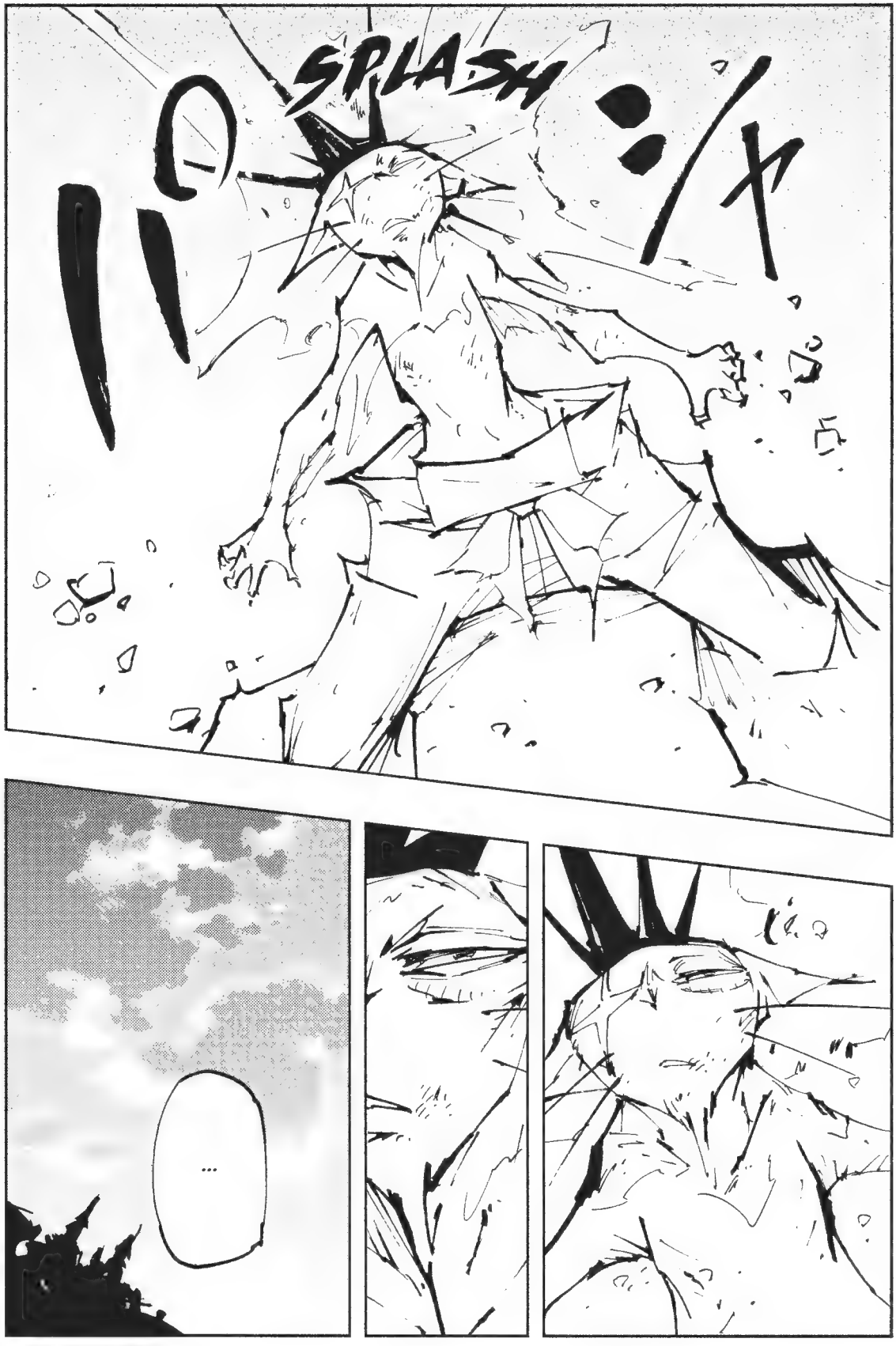
SHUDDER

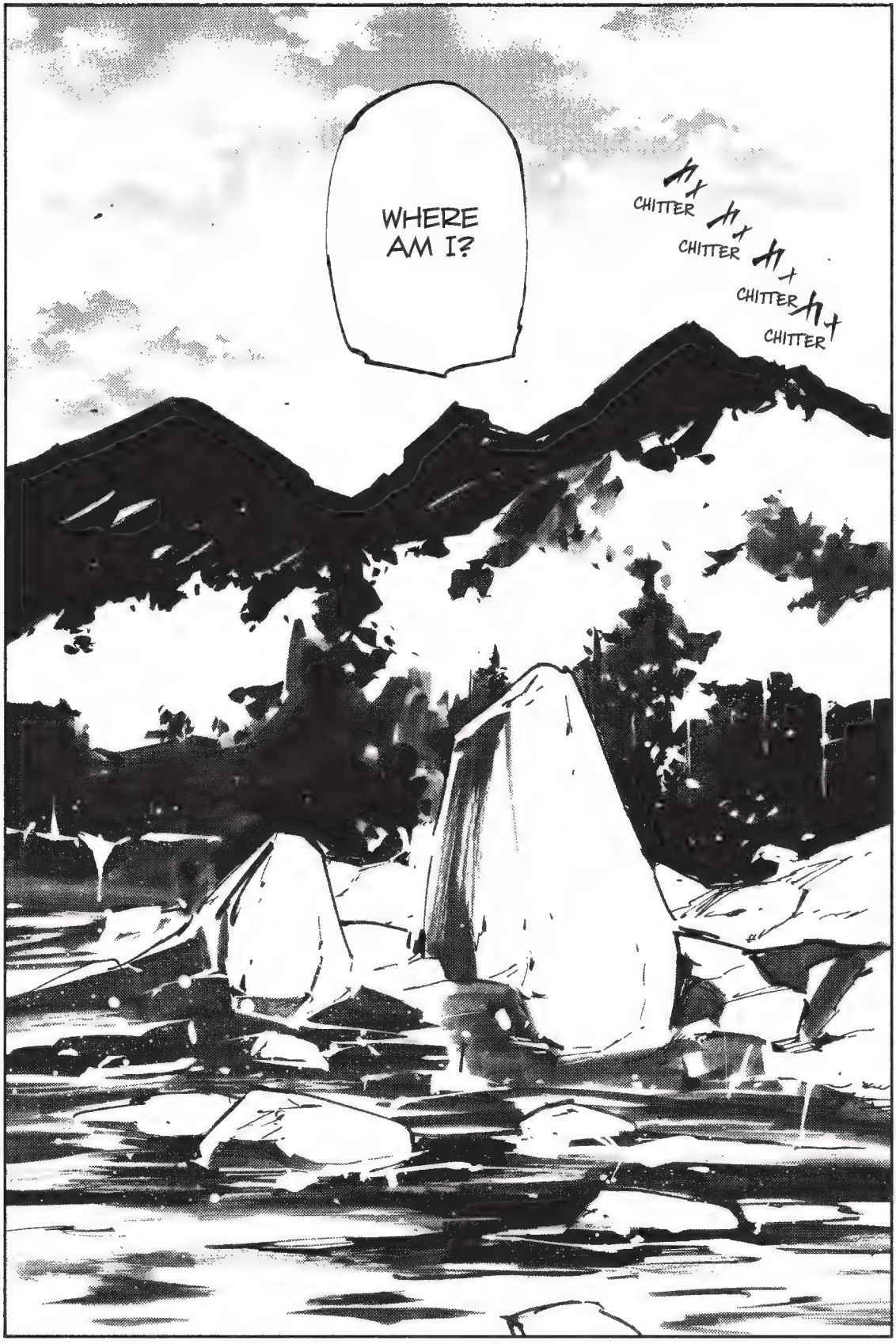
HA, HA, HA.

DID I ALREADY SAY THAT?

STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
A-ARE THOSE THE THREE CATS FROM THE WANTED POSTERS?!
?!
...TCH.
YOU'RE LATE, MOGS!!!
BOSS!
ZSH

ARREST THEM! NOW!!!
THESE CATS ARE TOO MUCH FOR ONE TOM TO HANDLE!
BA-
BAM
YES, SIR!!!
...GH!


SPLASH
...


WHERE AM I?
CHITTER
CHITTER
CHITTER
CHITTER

WE GRABBED YOU AND RAN FOR OUR LIVES TO THE MOUNTAINS, BUT WE FELL INTO THE RIVER. IT CARRIED US QUITE A WAYS DOWNSTREAM.
WHERE INDEED.
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT TROUBLE, OLD TOM.
DOG-GONE IT.
THE SUN IS SETTING. WE'LL HAVE TO CAMP HERE FOR THE NIGHT.

CHITTER
CHITTER
CHITTER
CHITTER
...OH. RIGHT.

BAH HA HA!
LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE JUST A LITTLE TWIG WHEN YOU'RE WET!
RISE
...LIKE YOU'RE ONE TO TALK.

I'M SORRY... YOU REALLY HAVE GONE OUT OF YOUR WAY FOR ME.

...

EW...
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU? STOP THAT.
BRR

THE HELL?

WHILE WE WAIT FOR SUNRISE, WILL YOU TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF?
...FOR PITY'S SAKE.
I FEEL I'VE SEEN SOMETHING I SHOULD NEVER HAVE WITNESSED.
WHAT SAY YOU, NORA-CHIYO?

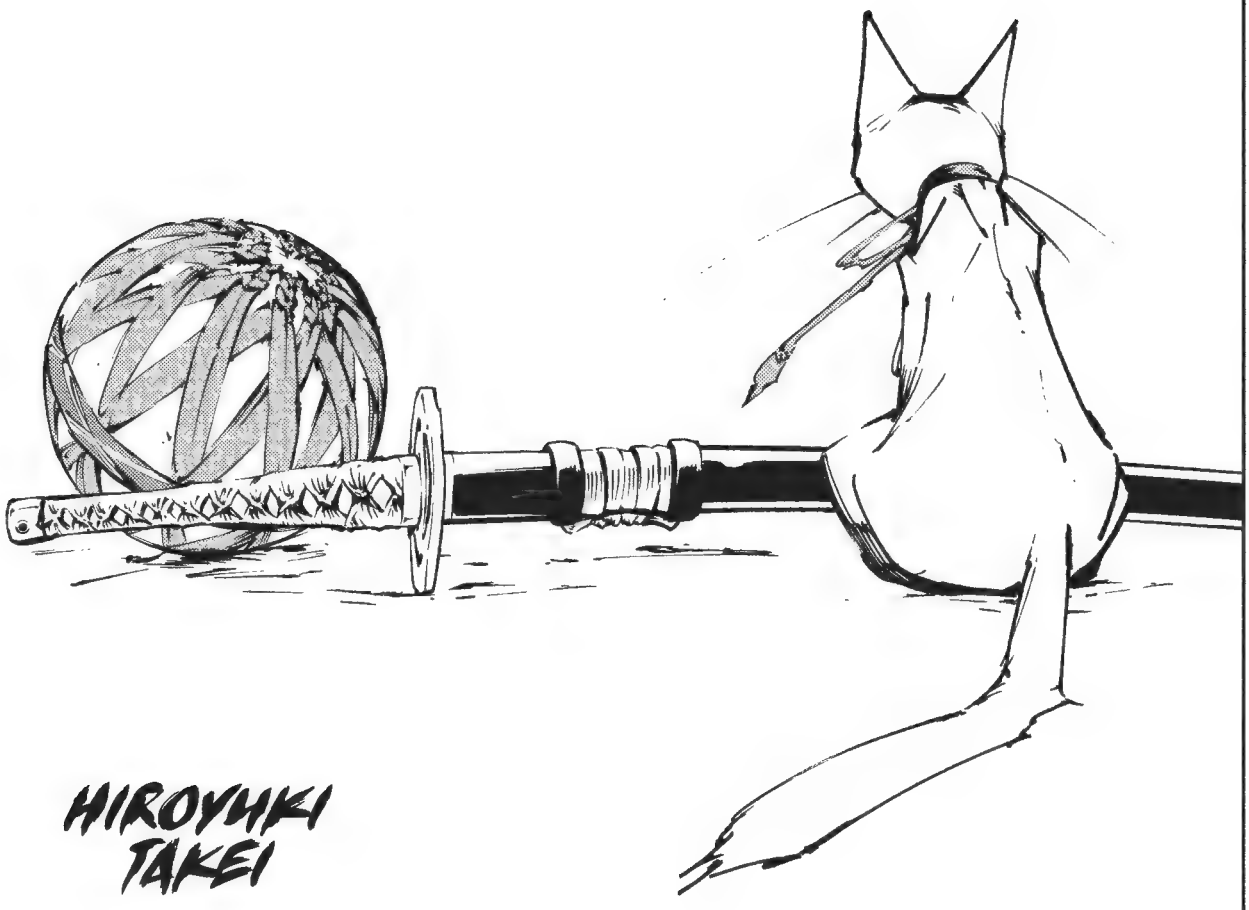
ネコガハラ
NEKOGAHARA

WHILE WE WAIT FOR SUNRISE, WILL YOU TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF?
WHAT SAY YOU, NORA-CHIYO?
BESIDES, WHERE WOULD I START?
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? YOU THINK I'D GIVE YOU THAT INFORMA-TION?

...BUT WHATEVER YOU DO, NEVER REPEAT WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU.
...
SO YOU *ARE* GONNA TELL US?!
...NO, IT'S ALL RIGHT. PLEASE, CONTINUE.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
ALL RIGHT, MAYBE I WON'T.

NEKOGAHARA

CHAPTER 19:
HI LONE KITTY,
PART 1



HIROYUKI TAKEI

takei

THE KEEP

HISS!

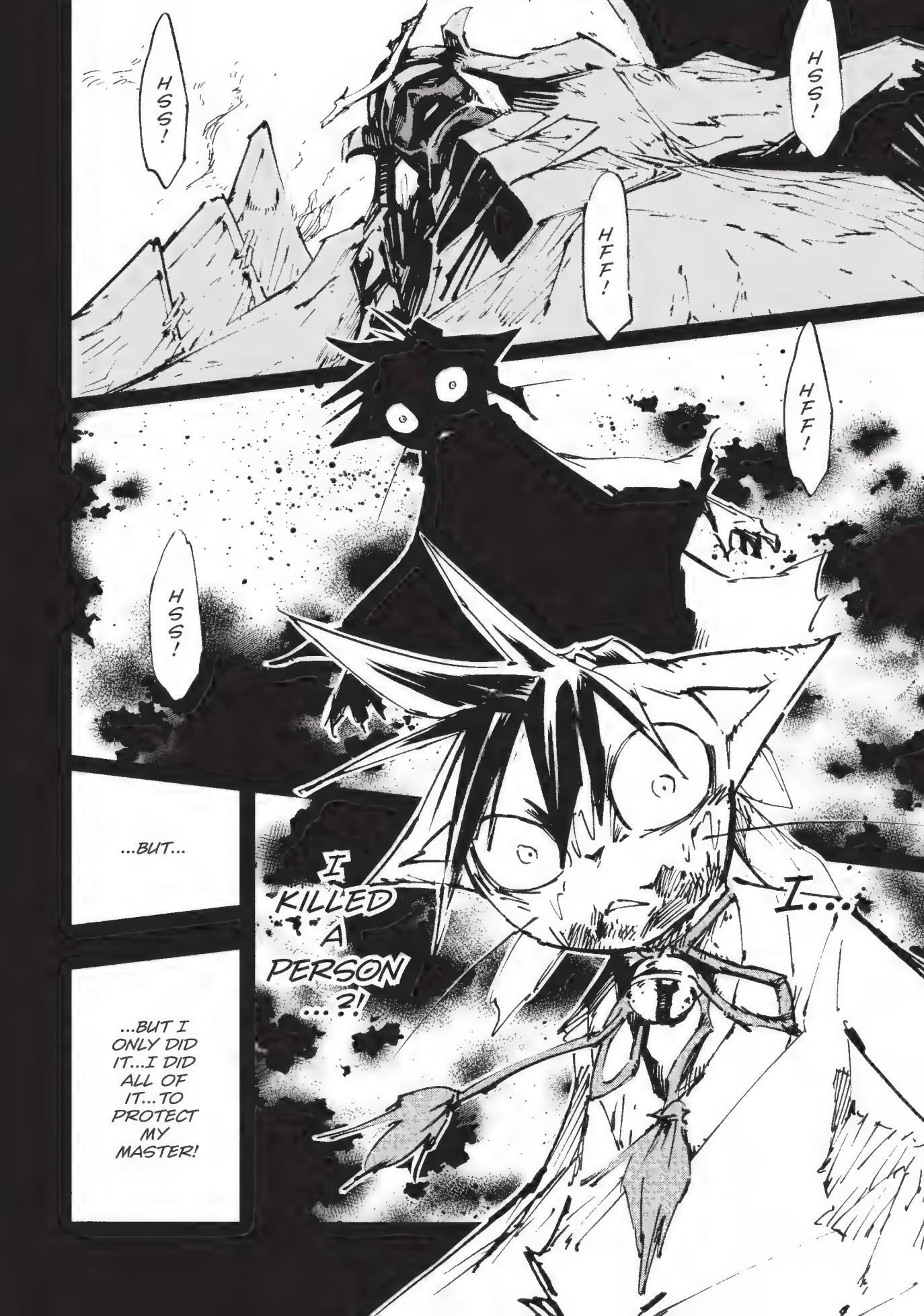
HISS!

SABAYAMA CASTLE

HISS!

HISS!

THE FIFTH YEAR OF REICHŌ.


HSS!
HSS!
HFF!
HFF!
HSS!
...BUT...
I KILLED A PERSON ...?!
I...
...BUT I ONLY DID IT...I DID ALL OF IT...TO PROTECT MY MASTER!

MASTER!
WHOOOOSH
MASTER, WHERE HAVE YOU GONE?!!!
MASTER! MASTER, WHERE ARE YOU?!!!
SNAP
HE'S NOT HERE... WHERE IS MY MASTER?!
I HOPE THIS MEANS HE'S ESCAPED!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
CLATTER
!

GLARE
EEEK!
...!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
KA-
CRACK

RIP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
...!!!
KOTA-TSU!
BLAST! AT THIS RATE, MY MASTER'S CASTLE WILL BE RUINED!
THE CEILING IS FALL-ING IN!

...OF COURSE! I CAN AT LEAST SAVE KOTATSU!
KER-SNAP
FWOOOOOOSH
ON THAT DAY...

...MY MASTER ISHIDAI TSUNARI'S FORCES WERE DEFEATED, AND I WAS ONCE AGAIN A STRAY...

CATS FEAR PEOPLE AS GODS, BUT PEOPLE FIGHT JUST LIKE CATS, AND JUST LIKE CATS, THEY DIE.
OUTSIDE THE CASTLE, THE GROUND WAS LITTERED WITH COUNTLESS DEAD HUMAN BODIES.

I MUST HAVE WANTED TO ESCAPE THE FEAR OF HAVING KILLED THE RED WARRIOR. IT WAS A MISTAKE TO BLAME THAT EMOTION ON PEOPLE.

I DIDN'T DO ANY-THING WRONG.

SHIVER

SHIVER

SHIVER

THAT'S RIGHT. HE WAS JUST UNLUCKY. THAT'S WHY HE DIED.

ZSH
LEAVE THE KATANA HERE.
SO YOU RAN HERE AFTER IT BURNED IN THE WAR.
YOU'RE A KEPT CAT FROM THE CASTLE, AREN'T YOU?
I LOVE IT WHEN A CODDLED KITTY FALLS OFF HIS PEDESTAL.
I FEEL FOR YOU, BUT THEM'S THE BREAKS.

OH, REALLY? SORRY, OUR BAD.
...JUST NOT THIS.
...YOU CAN HAVE EVERY-THING ELSE I OWN.
...
IS THAT WHAT YOU EXPECTED, FURBALL?!
WHAM
!

NOT THIS. ANYTHING BUT THIS.
...I CAN'T.
A... ANIKI*.
*A FORM OF ADDRESS USED FOR AN OLDER BROTHER FIGURE, OFTEN USED BY GANGSTER TYPES.
LIVING THE HIGH LIFE ONE DAY, A STRAY THE NEXT. BRINGS A TEAR TO YOUR EYE, DOESN'T IT?
THAT KATANA MUST MEAN AN AWFUL LOT TO HIM.
GIVE IT UP, MOGS.

TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 4...

TRANSLATION NOTES

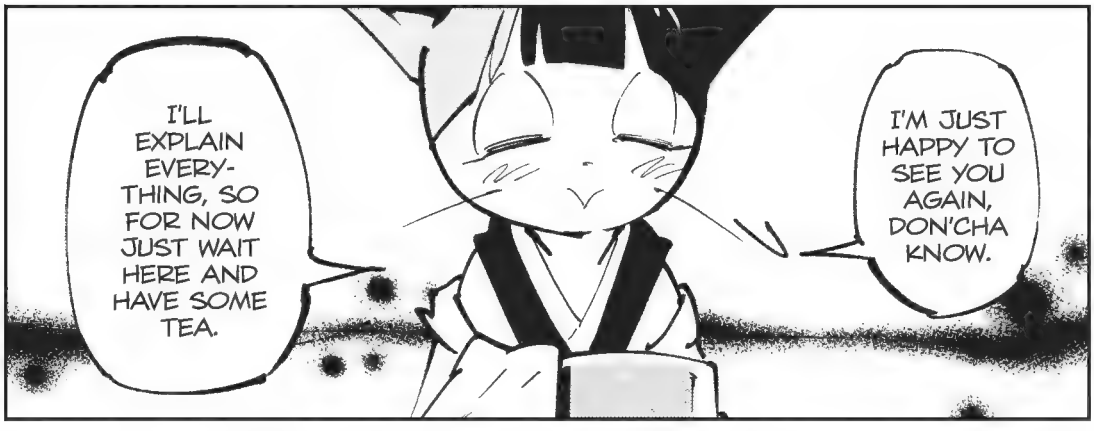
Three Grown Kittens, page 2

The translators took a bit of a liberty with the chapter title. Also, there was a poem included with the magazine publication of this chapter, which influenced the translators' choice of chapter title. The poem was:

> Two grown kittens,
> tattered and torn
> all lazy and listless
> in light fur adorned.

The Japanese chapter title is *Sanbiki ga Kiru!*, which means "Three [Animals] Wear [Clothing]!". The "wear" part of the title is likely a reference to the fact that Norachiyo has finally put on some clothes. Written another way, it is the title of a Japanese historical drama which has been translated as "Three for the Kill!" To make the chapter title more relatable to readers who are unfamiliar with the TV show, the translators chose to use a cat connection rather than a historical drama connection, and alluded to the nursery rhyme "Three Little Kittens". As for the poem, the original Japanese has a list of three words that sound very similar—*kizudarake*, *kedaruge*, and *kedarake*—which roughly mean "covered in injuries," "listless," and "covered in fur."

Don'cha know, page 7



When Omike spoke to Norachiyo in the first chapter, she mostly uses *teineigo*, or polite speech. Now that she and Norachiyo are on somewhat closer terms, she drops the formalities and lets her accent come through. She speaks in the dialect of the Yamagata region, which is quite some distance from Norachiyo's home in Ōmeow. It may be a little anachronistic, but the translators have chosen to represent the Yamagata dialect with the Minnesota dialect of the United States.

The young lion, page 27

The translators asked Kurogane to do them a favor and translate Shishiwaka's name, for the benefit of our English-speaking readers. Shishiwaka is Japanese for "lion youth," so of course Kurogane knows that any time he says the name, he is in effect calling the cat a young lion.

Stover's Steamcloud, page 56

Kumotarō's epithet, *Tōge no Kamamushi* translates literally to "pot-steam of the mountain pass," but more importantly, it is a play on words. Although the translators cannot be sure yet why Kumotarō was given this nickname, it sounds similar to a famous style of *ekiben*, or "train station lunch," known as *Tōge no Kamameshi*, or "the pot-cooked meal of the mountain pass." It was invented for travelers on the go, who were sick and tired of the limited options available to eat at train stations along their journey. The translators hoped to create a similar connection by invoking the American brand of frozen prepared foods, Stouffer's. The reader may rest assured that stoves called *kamado* did exist in Japan at the time this series takes place. The "cloud" part comes from Kumotarō's actual name, meaning roughly "cloud boy."

His Nick Name, page 87

The title of this chapter is a reference to the international hit anime movie, *Your Name.*, or *Kimi no Na wa*, in Japanese. The chapter title is *Yatsu no Nawa*, which literally means "his rope," specifically the sort of rope used to tie up arrested persons. The translators attempted to maintain both the reference to the movie and idea of capturing someone by adding "nick," which is slang for "arrest."

Jumanji, page 126

While the author of this manga is surely familiar with the movie *Jumanji*, the name of this technique has another meaning. Literally, in this case it translates to "ten man symbols." The man symbol, or swastika, is an auspicious religious symbol in Buddhism, where it represents the footprints of Buddha. In Chinese and Japanese art, it has been used to represent a repeating

pattern, and very occasionally it has been used to represent ninja. The "ten" likely comes from the type of weapon Abyhei is using—a *jitte*, whose name means "ten hands." This weapon was common among police officers in the Edo Era, who were not allowed to carry swords.

Unsafe Cracker, page 127

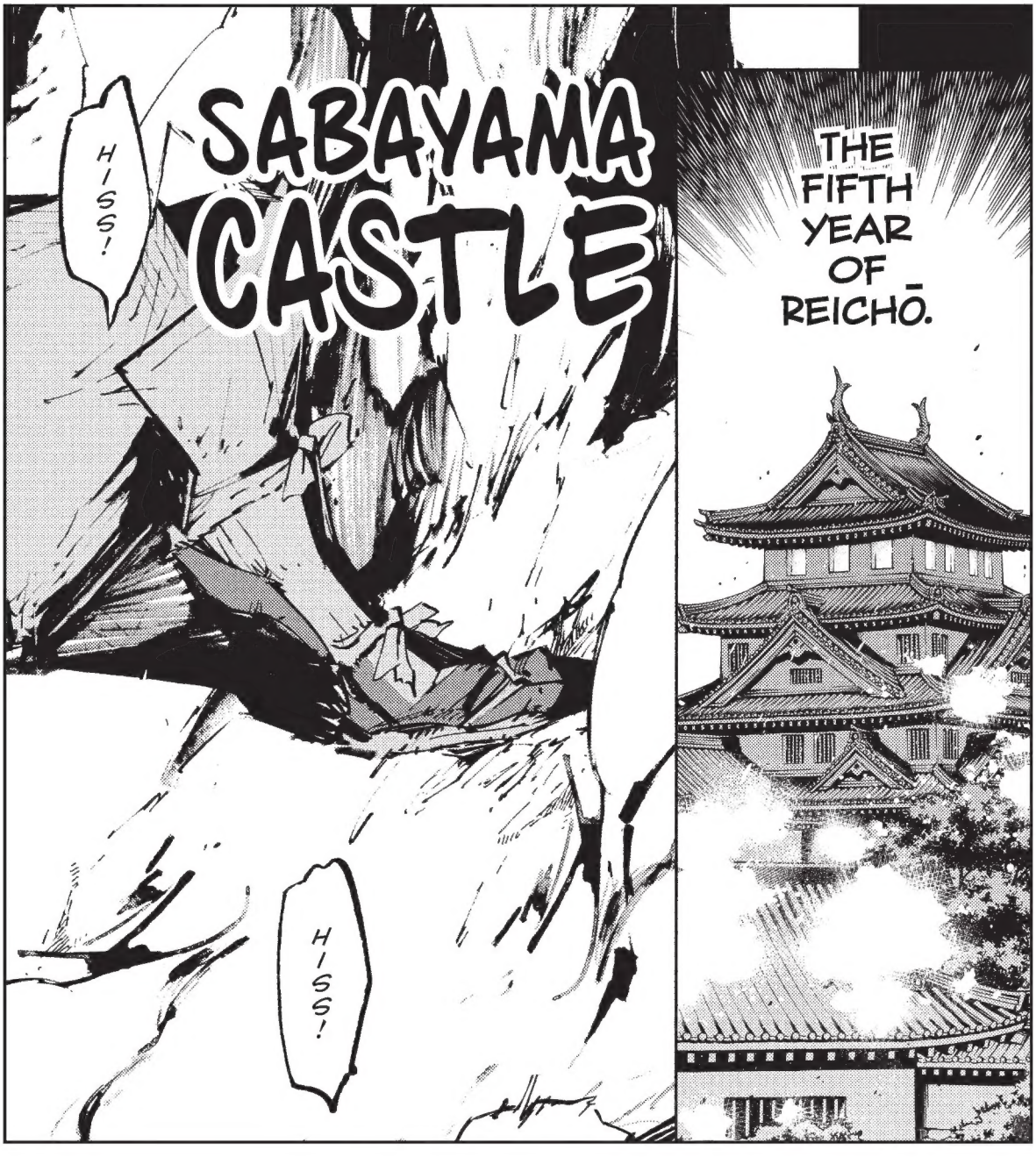
It should come as no surprise to the reader that this chapter title is based on more wordplay. The original Japanese for this portion of it is *ore ore sagi*, which usually refers to a type of phone fraud called "me me fraud," where a crook will call an unsuspecting victim and, claiming to be a relative, say, "It's me, it's me. I got in trouble and need some money." In this case, however, the phrase is given kanji characters that mean "Break! Break, heron!" As there are no avian creatures anywhere to be seen in this chapter, the translators believe the "heron" was only there for the wordplay, and chose to replace the pun with an English one that focused on the "break" aspect of the phrase.

CHITTER CHITTER, page 149

In English, one of the few ways to express the sound of a cicada is CHITTER CHITTER, but in Japanese, there are specific ways to express the calls of different species of cicada. In this case, the original Japanese used was KANA KANA KANA KANA, which is the sound of *higurashi* (EN: evening cicada). The sound of cicadas is one of many ways to give life to a scene and place it in a specific season or time. The evening cicada is often active in between September-October, so it's most likely the fall season. A type of cicada that is more common in Japan is active in summer, and its call (MIIN MIIN MIIN in Japanese) is normally used to depict summer scenes in manga and anime.

Reichō, page 158

Because these events take place before Japan adopted the Western calendar, time was not marked with the same years. Prior to the Meiji Era, a new era began whenever the emperor decided something significant enough to mark the beginning of an era had occurred. Norachiyo's story begins in the fifth year of the Reichō Era, which is a feline era that corresponds with the human Keichō Era that began in 1596 (making the fifth year 1600). Incidentally, *reichō* can mean "superior" or "primate," likely referring to the humans who reign supreme.



KC KODANSHA COMICS

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By Kazuhiro Fujita

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Nekogahara 3

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